

THE LIFE OF LOVE

Biography of
Sri Srimat Radharamana Charan Das Deva
The Veritable Embodiment of Sri Chaitanya
Mahaprabhu's Universal Religion of Love



Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor



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(Adikeshava Das)



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"Barha Baba"
Sri Radharamana Charan Das Babaji Maharaj

PREFACE

The *Life of Love* is the biography of Sri Srimat Radharamana Charan Das Deva, popularly known as 'Barha Baba,' which means 'Baba, the great.' He was so called, because he was truly great—great in heart, great in love, great in power to do things, which our men of reason and science would not believe even if they see.

He was a living embodiment of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's universal religion of love. He was like a stream of love, running its course and sweeping along with it every soul that came in its way toward the boundless and bottomless Ocean of Love and Peace and Transcendental Bliss. He carried Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's message of love from place to place, door to door and person to person, singing and dancing, laughing and weeping in rapturous ecstasies like Mahaprabhu Himself. A veritable dynamo of divine love, he lovingly embraced whomsoever he met and by his mere touch transmitted a wave of love into his heart. Only to see him was to love him, to hear him sing was to be baited, to talk to him was to be captivated and to be embraced by him was to be sold out to him for ever and ever.

He was a flower that stemmed from the earth, but was alien to all that was earthly. He was an angel that came from above down on earth to alleviate our suffering and to deliver us from bondage. He told us how all our suffering could be easily removed and we could attain the highest goal of life—the attainment of the Lotus Feet of the Lord and His loving service only through *Sankirtan* or the congregational chanting of His Name. Since we, the *jivas* of Kali, would not easily believe him, he mercifully took it upon himself to demonstrate

to us the inconceivable power of the Divine Name by curing diseases, melting stones, making the trees dance and the animals behave like devout Vaishnavas, and even by bringing the dead back to life through the chanting of the Name.

He taught, both by example and by precept, the religion of pure *bhakti*, distinguishing it from the so called *bhakti* of the pseudo sects that had sprung up like mushrooms in the post-Chaitanya era. Even now there is no dearth of pseudo sects, imitation gurus and quacks in religion. These are the people, who debase religion. But unfortunately this is what most people want and so feel attracted towards them. The few, who want the Truth, get the Truth. In our Lord's merciful dispensation there is no disappointment for them. There is for them the eternal exhortation of Christ—"Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will open."

Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva stands out prominently before us as the very embodiment of Truth. In a time like ours, when millions of young people are turning towards the 'mysterious East' eagerly searching for answers to their never ending questions, the appeal of this biography, in which he seems to anticipate and answer all their questions, is bound to be great, specially because throughout these chapters he talks to them beyond the differences of centuries and continents, races and nationalities, 'isms,' creeds and sects.

The biography of Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva was first published in 1919 in six volumes in Bengali under the title '*Charit Sudha*.' It was anonymously written by a *siddha mahatma* and a close disciple of Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva. His biography in English was published in 1926 under the title '*The Life of Love*.' It was written by Sri Narendra Nath Chatterjee, also a disciple of Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva. It was perhaps intended to be the English version of

Charit Sudha. But for some reason it could not be completed and remained, more or less, an English adaptation of only the first volume of *Charit Sudha*. I was asked to write the complete biography, drawing as much as possible from all the six volumes of *Charit Sudha* and including what Sri Narendra Nath Chatterjee had already written in the shape of the first few chapters of the new work. I have done the same. I have retained the title of the old work, because no other title would have been so appropriate, and I have included substantial part of the old work, not only because it is beautifully written, but also because, as the work of a worthy disciple and close associate of Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva, it has a sanctity and importance of its own. I have, however, been compelled by the exigency of space and the requirements of uniformity to drop some parts of it and include others after making minor changes here and there.

I am conscious of my various limitations, inspite of which I have undertaken this task, and the mistakes I must have committed. I can only beg my kind readers to view them with indulgence.

It is my pleasure to thank my friend Sri Swami B.R. Sadhu Maharaja for taking all the pains in typing and composing the work on the computer, for preparing the glossary and for giving valuable suggestions from the standpoint of Western readers. My gratitude is specially due to Sri Badrinarayana Bhagavata Bhushana Prabhu, the founder-*acharya* of Sri Chaitanya Bhakti Rakshaka Mandapa, for spontaneously and lovingly undertaking the publication of the work and publishing it speedily and beautifully.

O.B.L Kapoor



Sri Srimat Radharamana Charan Das Deva

INTRODUCTION

Behold the man—a man among men, a flower of humanity indeed! Eye him keenly, and you catch the beaming smile. How it differs from the laugh that speaks the vacant mind! And yet, how different from the sardonic grin of worldly wise men! It is the smile of one, who knows the whole truth and enjoys the blissful repose of a heart in communion with God. Look into the eyes, deep in wisdom like the bottomless sea, overflowing with love and tenderness divine. Mark the gentle curvature between the nose and the cheeks—what a pathetic outburst of heartfelt compassion for the erring sons of men! The firm features, the thick-set frame, the capacious arms, the spacious chest, the noble pose, the dignified mien—above all, the perfect self-possession that is manifest in them all, that creates the impression of a high order of virility and strength coupled with a nobility of soul and magnanimity of disposition, hardly to be met with in the commonalty of men, we find in the world.

We talk of heroes and hero-worship. Why, here is a hero, in the noblest sense of the term, within the living memory of living men. For, who is a hero? Is it the valiant man of a thousand fields, that is never daunted by battalions? Here is a hero that knew no fear and made conquests of love wherever he went. Is it the man of gigantic intellect, who has solved

the problems of life and convinced the people of the truth of his principles? Here is the hero, who has done the same without logomachy and literary demonstrations, who has imparted the truth, like a tangible something, so to speak, by a single touch, a close hearty embrace, a tender look, or a word of mouth, and changed the whole course of the lives of men. Is it the moral man who stands for the greatest good of the greatest number of men—the minimization of sufferings and scattering of happiness on earth? No man can hold a candle to him in respect of his achievements in this direction; for he was like a ministering angel, chasing away the sorrows of life wherever he appeared, dancing and singing the Name of the Lord, and scattering peace and happiness not only among men, but also among the beasts—nay, even the plants themselves, as the following pages will show. Finally, if by a hero we mean the saint, who annuls his self and goes about with the message of God and ministers to the spiritual welfare of the world—why, here is just the man for it, for he—no paid parson for the parish he—he devoted his life to the salvation of the world, expecting no returns, no comforts, nothing of the kind for himself, giving away the best human treasure for nothing, the treasure that buys the happiness of both the worlds, for the simple reason that it was in his nature to give it away, and it was a thing only to be given away—love and nothing but love, pure love divine, which must be given away for the regeneration and resuscitation of the world.

We talk of cosmopolitanism. Our hero was a true cosmopolitan, a true servant of God, who found his God in every man, in every being, in everything he came across, and loved and served accordingly, without respect of caste, color, creed, or even the species to which it belonged. To him it was all one, whether it was a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, for the matter of that, an Indian or an Englishman, a red Indian

or a black Negro, a man or a bull or a dog in the street, in as much as all these had the indwelling Spirit of God, to Whose love and service he had consecrated himself. If Hindus found in him a friend, a philosopher, a lover and a guide, Muslims and others were not excluded from his friendship and love, but readily received in the open arms of this man of infinite, indiscriminate love. He used to weep in commiseration with the distress of the worldlings, tempest-tost on the boisterous sea of life—poor sufferers of all the parts of the world, here there and everywhere. On one occasion he resolved even to go over to Europe and America to show to the people the way out of the strifes and quarrels and the miseries of existence, but then there was Baba Bharati with him, who volunteered his services to spread the religion of love and bliss to those far-off lands of the setting sun. His heart bled equally for all men alike.

Lastly, there is the idea of the Superman, and this has engaged the attention of philosophers and given rise to valuable dissertations on the platform and in the press. The Superman is the transcendental man—a man so far above the average run of mankind that he can hardly be counted as a member of the species of ordinary mortals we call men. He is like a star, that dwells apart, and yet so near, living and moving and having his being, under our nose, before our eyes, here on earth. He is to be seen, for he comes to us from time to time, and, yet we cannot know him as he is, we cannot properly estimate his worth, for he surpasses the comprehension of ordinary men. He comes to hold out to us the generous ideal for the progressive human race for us to follow for the betterment of our lives, the salvation of our souls. The superman is God's own representative on earth, and he has a mission to fulfil—he has to work so as to leave the world better than he found it when he came. Knowledge, Love,

Delight, Power, and Unity are some of the Names of God. In the Superman, we find a sweet, harmonious blending of all these divine virtues working in the fulfilment of his divine mission in life. Such a man, we shall find our hero to be as we proceed to study him in all the wonderful details of his life.

Some say that he was God Himself. We say that is more than we can know, that is more than any man can and should take upon himself to say. Others say he was a Superman—a Great Soul—the teacher of all the world, the saviour of the age. He knows who knows, we do not pretend to know as much. We say he was the Man of Love, who loved for the sake of love, loved one and loved all, loved them as he loved his God, loved them being lost in loving contemplation of his God; and loving thus, he clasped them all in a loving embrace, communicated to them his love divine, and made them his own for ever—his own in God, and loving and living for God.

So, our hero is a Man of Love. Such a man is like the big banyan or the spreading oak—a shelter from the fitful fever of life—a fit refuge for weather-beaten people under the storm and stress of an inclement world. Such a man is like the oasis in the midst of a desert, appeasing the hankering of a soul, unappeased in its vain wandering in quest of happiness in the unhappy world. Such a man is like the breath of Heaven on the hell-fire of the manifold miseries of existence on earth. Then, fly, O, fly—you, that suffer—fly from the worries and troubles of life and seek the shelter in the bower of love, knowledge and power, you find in this towering, charming personality presented to your view.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHILD

The pretty, picturesque, little village of Mahishkhola stands on the Chitra in the Narhail subdivision of the District of Jessore in Bengal. There, Nature bestows her beauties and bounties with a lavish hand, and the people are a merry band of seraphs and cherubs on the place beneath. The scenery is as beautiful as the crops are plentiful in the harvest seasons of the year. The azure sky, the grassy green, the golden fields, the verdant woods, the trees bent under the weight of their fruits, the soft delicious air perfumed with the scent of flowers, the rustling leaves, the murmuring brook, the lowing herds, the cooing birds, all combine to make a heaven of this blessed land on earth. Privation and want is unknown for many miles around; peace and happiness reign everywhere. Fortune smiles on the villagers, and they all appear with a healthy glow on their cheeks and a ready smile on their lips.

At the time of which we are speaking the majority of the inhabitants of Mahishkhola were Kayasthas by caste, and the Ghoshes were the richest and the most influential of them all. They were the landlords of the village, and Mohan Chandra was the ruling Zemindar of the place. This Mohan Chandra was the father in the flesh of the hero of our work. He was his third son by his second wife, Kanakasundari by name.

BIRTH

It was a cloudy night in the month of April, 1853, and the rains came down when Kanakasundari lay in labor in the lying-in room beneath the betelnut tree on the adjoining yard. The storm came on; the winds began to howl; there was a heavy downpour; trees were uprooted, and the broken boughs were swimming in the streams on the beaten paths of the village. The darts and flashes of lightning were coming and going, and the crash and roll of thunder was heard from time to time. All Nature was astir—convulsed with pain, as it were, passing through the throes of childbirth, so to speak, sympathizing with the labor pain of the mother in the lying-in room. The betelnut tree was struck with lightning and instantly reduced to ashes, but strange to say, not the slightest damage was done to the room and the inmates of the room. Providence saved them all, and Nature meant it as a sign to show that she brushed off all the evil influences at work in the sacred hour of the advent of the blessed newcomer. The night was passing away, and it was in the rosy hours of the dawn that the child was born—the child that was to dispel the accumulated darkness of ages in the world and bring in the sunshine of Divine Light and Love for the suffering multitude of men.

THE BABY WOULD NOT SUCK

So, the baby came to see the light of the world, but Oh, that it would not suck! What a pity! What is to be done! How could it be made to live if it would not suck! But no, it would not suck. The mother tried to make it suck, and so did the midwife, and all the matrons of the neighbourhood, but to no purpose. The baby would not suck of the mother's breast—it

was too much 'of the earth' for this newcomer from the kingdom of God. Three days passed, and the baby went without the mother's milk. On the third day, they tried to make him drink some milk. There was much cry but little wool, one would say, for little would it drink. Three days more, six days in all, the little baby going without any milk—they despaired of its life. The *ojhas*¹ and *kavirajas*² were called in but they could do nothing. On the sixth day, however, one Rajani Kanta Bhattacharya, a neighbour, who was something of the devotee, came and advised them to offer worship to the Lord, and give him *prasada*³ to drink, and then he would drink, for the baby was a devotee and would not take anything but what had been offered up to the Lord. It was done. The Lord was worshipped, and lo! the offered milk was readily taken by the newborn baby, and it began to suck of the mother's breast after it was bathed in the *charanamrita*—the spiritualised water from off the feet of God in the form of His Image, worshipped with the spirit of love and devotion.

PRASADA AND CHARANAMRITA: SPIRITUALISATION OF FOOD AND WATER

Matter and spirit—these are the two great principles of all being. Matter is that which presents itself to our senses, and is readily perceived by men that live entirely in the world of senses. Spirit is something beyond the range of sensuous perception and as such it is beyond the ken of matter-of-fact

¹ *Ojhas* are the quacks credited with the knowledge of incantations and efficacious herbs which are sometimes found useful in curing diseases and other affections.

² *Kavirajas* are the physicians trained in the *Ayurveda*—the Vedic Science and art of medicine.

³ Food offered to the Lord.

people of the world. But there is the spirit—the spirit of God, immanent in the world and beyond. Everything is potentially divine, and so is man, who is born to manifest this Divinity within. He can do this with the gracious help of the Name of the Lord, which is inseparably associated with the Lord Himself. Yes, yes, the *sadhaka* can—the trained man of purified soul and light and love—he can manifest the Divinity wherever he will. He can manifest the spirit of the Lord in the food and drink and holy water consecrated to his Lord. He spiritualises the whole thing, for nothing but the spirit is acceptable to him—the *vigraha*¹ he looks upon is the spirit, and not the material image as it is vainly supposed to be; the food he takes is no longer the vegetable always sold in the market place, but it is the spirit food for the nourishment of his spiritual being; the water he drinks is not the common water of the fountain, but the spirit water for quenching the thirst of his thirsty soul; the men who come into contact with him are not common flesh and blood they were before, but transfigured, transfigured and transformed into the consistency of spiritual beings, the land he traverses is no longer the rocky soil of earthy composition, but the hallowed land divine, the kingdom of God on earth below. This is a truth, no mystery, and we come to know it by and by in the natural course of our spiritual development in life.

THE HOROSCOPE

So the baby grew, 'mewling and puking in the mother's arms'. The astrologer came and made the horoscope. He said he was glad to find Vrihaspati controlling the destiny in the hour of birth. This showed that the baby was not a common

¹ The form of the Deity.

child, he bade fair to be a great man in after life. In the seventh month after birth the *annaprasana* ceremony was held, when the baby was given solid food to eat for the first time in its life. It was the custom at this time to hold a plate before the child—a plate containing sweets and toys, a copy of *Chandi*¹ and gold coins—to test the natural inclination of the little man. The baby stretched out its puny arms and took hold of the *Chandi* in one of its tiny hands, while with the other it picked up the sweets and gave them away to the ladies standing by. They were all in high glee to see what it did, for they thought that the baby would be well-versed in the sacred lore and charitable in its conduct in adult life. This is feminine logic, one would say, and silly superstition pure and simple—this divination on such flimsy grounds. But the fact is, they were not very far from the truth, as time will show and our further study of the newborn baby in its maturity.

As time went on the baby began to crawl on all fours, devouring things and dashing them to pieces. Then it began to prattle and then to toddle, led by the hand, 'Chali, chali, pa, pa (walking, walking, step by step),' as the Indian mother would say.

Our Raicharan—for such was the name of our hero in his early days—was only five years old when his father died and two years after the second brother, and then after two years again the eldest and the youngest brother departed from the world, so that all the love and affection of the bereaved mother was lavishly bestowed on him and him alone. He was now the apple of her eyes, the prop and stay of her life, and she would not rest if Raicharan was away from her for some time.

¹ It is one of the scriptures containing a vivid account of the *lila*—the Divine feats—of the Divine Mother.

THE SCHOOL-BOY

He was afterwards admitted to the Narhail High School. A school-boy as he was, he had to attend to his family affairs also for want of a proper guardian to manage them in his behalf. A sharp shining boy of uncommon good sense and amiable disposition, his sweet, simple ways endeared him to all who came in close touch with him. He was rather naughty, as promising boys almost invariably are, when they are young, but he always topped the list of successful boys in his class. He was a spirited lad—naughty they would say, the grim village schoolmasters of bygone days—but he was so kindhearted that he would run a risk to remove the distress of his fellows and others.

HIS DELICATE FEARS FOR HUMAN SUFFERING

Sometimes in the afternoon he would be clearing the jungles and picking the thorns from off the trodden ways, lest they harmed those, who happened to tread on them. Who taught him to entertain these delicate fears for the slightest pain of human beings? Who prompted him to go out of the common way and exert himself to remove the chances and possibilities of human suffering? We leave it to the philosophers to solve this problem of child mentality, and pass on to some of the remarkable incidents of this period of his life.

On one occasion he gave away his own umbrella to a boy, who had none and chose to suffer from the scorching rays of the summer sun instead. On another occasion he found, on his way home, a poor man shivering with cold in winter. His kind heart melted with pity. He wrapped him with his shawl, and came shivering back to home. He was very happy at heart to think that the man was cozy and

comfortable in the warm clothing, but he feared his mother would take him to task for giving the costly thing away. But his mother was no ordinary mother. When she heard it all, she approved of his conduct and blessed him heartily for what he had done.

It was afternoon. Raicharan was passing the way, when he noticed an old man lying on the wayside. The man had fever on his way home from the market, and his bundle of foodstuffs was lying at a distance by his side. He could not muster strength to carry his baggage, not even to walk unaided back to his poor lodgings. He was weeping. This was too much for Raicharan. He lost no time to put the bundle on his own head, and lent him a helping hand to see him home. The poor man was overpowered, and hastened to tell him that he belonged to a servile caste, he was a washerman, and that the respectable gentleman's son should not demean himself so much as to carry the burden of a man he was not to touch. But he stopped him saying "No matter, no question of caste here at present. You are ill and you need my help, and I must see you home." With these words, he took him safely to his house, returned late in the evening and related the incident to his mother, who was anxiously awaiting his arrival.

Instances of this kind might be multiplied, for his life was full of them. His life was really a never-ending series of such loving sacrifices for suffering humanity at every stage and period of his life. To be good was easy and natural with him, and he rendered these services to his fellowmen without any artificial constraint, and without any distinction or discrimination. These are petty details, it may be urged. But they are all the more important on that account; for they alone can help us to make a true estimate and correct appreciation of a man's worth. The little acts of daily life throw a flood of light on the real character of a man more than the golden deeds

done on the grand occasions before the wondering gaze and loud applause of multitudes of men. A man is really good, if he is good, not only in public, but also in his private life; not only when he has made a noise in the world in his later years, but also when he lived unknown in an obscure village, a mere school-boy in the early teens of life. Such was the case with our hero in his school-boy days and no wonder he would grow up to be a true spiritualist in his maturer years.

CHAPTER 2

THE YOUNG LANDLORD

Raicharan was still a student when his mother proposed his marriage. He was averse to the idea of early marriage. But the importunities of his distressed mother were great and his kind heart taught him it was better to yield and make her easy than to revolt and wreck her life, already battered and shattered by the death of her husband and three sons.

So one fine morning he was married. Not long after the marriage his mother died.

THE EARLY DAWN OF LATER LIFE

His mother's death came as a shock and an eye-opener to Raicharan. The light of his future life softly began to dawn upon him. He often sought to be alone and when alone he sang:

*"When, o when, will you take the Name of the Lord!
The days are numbered and they will end always.
The drops of water on the lotus are unsteady,
They fall off at the breath of the gentlest wind;
Even so is life; death comes and brushes it away.
The limbs are there, you cannot move them;
There are the eyes, but the light is fled,*

*The ears are open; they can no longer catch
The Name of the Lord in the hour of death."*

Such was man on earth he thought—now alive, now dead—now here, now nowhere; our 'longest life was but a day,' and we must make hay while the sun shone, we must solve the problem of life before the shadow of death came on and it was all over with us on this side of the pyre.

Still Raicharan felt that the time was not yet ripe for turning his back upon the world and that he had yet some duties at home, which must be performed before he could set out on the grand mission of his life. So he began to look after the affairs of his estate, as well as the estate of his father-in-law at Ghorhakhali, who had no son and had withdrawn from the world after leaving his estate to his care. His amiable ways won the hearts of the people under his care. They voluntarily gave him possession of lands which were out of possession for a long time. They would of themselves render to him the first fruits of the produce of their lands and the first milk of their milch cows before they would enjoy their food and drink. There were considerable tracts of waste land in the village, and the new Zemindar thought of utilizing them to the best advantage. He invited the wild tribes (the Santals) to settle therein, made the lands rent free for three or four years to come, during which time the new tenants might cultivate the lands and clear profits, and pay their rent only when they were in a position to do so without any trouble to themselves and their family. Thus the annual income of the estates was enhanced. This and other signs of Zemindari insight attracted the attention of the great Zemindar of Srirampur, Babu Ashutosh Goswami, and he made him the Nayeab or the manager of his Mamudpur estate.

Raicharan Babu was very fond of music from early years,

and *sankirtan*¹ parties were held in his house and his *katchari* (the seat or the office of the Zemindar) as well. He himself took part in the *sankirtan*. This was how he refreshed himself after the toils of his daily business. But he was hard upon the Vaishnavas or Vaishnavis (women Vaishnavas) that came singing and begging to his lodgings. He taunted and twitted them, and teased them so much that they would not venture to come to him again.

It may appear rather strange that he, a staunch lover of *sankirtan* himself, and the would-be leader of Vaishnavas in his later years, should have aversion for Vaishnavas at this period of his life. But the reason is not far to seek. They were the fallen angels, and angels when fallen are not looked upon with the same degree of awful veneration as when they are with God in the kingdom of Heaven. This was the case with the Vaishnavas of those days.

There is a marked rise and fall in the spiritual wave that sweeps across the world. Every action is followed by a corresponding reaction. Accordingly, darkness and folly, impurity and sinful ways of life appeared, when the High Religion of Light and Love of Sri Chaitanya and His comrades had glided past the field. It was a religion of the immortals, resting on the Elysian heights of the knowledge of the Eternal Truth, basking in the sunshine of the Grand Unity of all being, and living in the land of pure Love Divine. They were but few, who could enter into the right spirit of this lofty religion. The rest only imitatively tried to pass for the followers of the great creed, which was beyond their comprehension. Sri Chaitanya

¹ Men would unite and sing in chorus the Name of Lord Hari—the *mridanga* (a musical instrument resembling a drum) and *karatal*s (metal dices) beating time all the while. This is what is called *Sankirtan*, which means, singing sacred songs aloud in company.

gave the Name of the Lord to be sung by all to save themselves, and reserved the spirit of this religion for the few capacious souls, who had the mind to appreciate and the heart to cherish the greatest ideal of religion ever revealed to mankind. But they mistook him, the erring fools and ignoramuses that came after him. They took it into their heads to imitate the divine love of the *gopis* in the flesh and blood of men and women of the world, and began to satisfy their carnal appetites and animal cravings in the name of spirituality and love. It was like one black spot on the white linen, which marred the whole thing. Men came to notice it and naturally disdained to call it religion—the vice and villainy of the so-called Vaishnavas.

It was this so-called Vaishnavism and the so-called Vaishnavas that came to be reproved by the right-minded Raicharan of Mamudpur and Mahiskhola. To his mind, character was the first thing, the essential element in religion and religiousness, and a man of character without the forms of religion upon him was much better than a man without character, who made all the shows and pretenses of his professed faith.

THE IDEAL LANDLORD

The ideal ruler is he, who rules with an iron hand in a velvet glove; and if Raicharan was strong and firm to execute his plans and purposes, as evinced by the successful administration of Zemindari affairs, which commended him to the notice and confidence of his master, he was always good and kind to his subjects—always ready to extend his sympathy and munificence to the needy and the poor. Big tanks were excavated at his expense both at Ghorhakhali and Mamudpur, and his people had not to suffer from scarcity of water. Free

schools were established for the spread of primary education among the masses, and the teachers were paid out of his own pocket. Bananas were planted on all sides of the tanks, and the vegetables of the different seasons grown, for the free use of the villagers. The thirteen *parbas* (religious rites) in the twelve months of the year—the Dola-Yatra, the Rasa-Yatra, the Jhulan, Charhak and all the rest—were regularly performed in his house, and on all these occasions the people were treated with rich repast and delicious dishes. The strangers who passed that way were entertained as honourable guests in his house. All these human virtues combined to make him the natural headman of the whole neighbourhood, and he was always invited to act as the president of all philanthropic undertakings for many miles around.

One thing we must notice before we pass on to the next chapter of his life. It is this. Men like him are in the world, but not of it, as the saying goes. They would do anything they are put to, and do it well, but in their own peculiar way. They would marry, as others do, and beget children; but they would make nothing of leaving their wives and children when the hour is come. They would work and earn, if circumstances would require that they should, but they would not mind leaving all their wealth behind, and lead the life of a mendicant. The fact is, they are never attached to the world. They come to live as householders only to teach others their duties in life and show them the right principles of life and conduct, not only by precepts and words of mouth, but also by their own example. As the great men do, the leaders of men, so do the lesser men of the world. It is for this reason only that they lead worldly lives in the midst of the worldlings and not like others for the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, for the realization of their desires, for desires they have none for the fleeting joys of the ephemeral world.

THE LAST STROKE THAT SNAPPED THE CORD

So Raicharan Babu lived as a worldly man and displayed his abilities as the manager of an estate. Ashutosh Goswami was so pleased with him that he made him superintendent of the Satra Pargana. He once entrusted him with the difficult task of putting down a peasant revolt at Poail. Raicharan was unwilling to work any longer, because he was tired of the cruelties of Zemindari affairs, but the Zemindar would not let him go. At first, he tried to vex the Zemindar by incurring heavy expenses, by giving at-home and dinner parties to Poail people. When this was of no avail, he reluctantly sent his men to put down the revolt. The peasants were ready, and a fray was threatened. Raicharan was now between the horns of a dilemma. On the one side so many human lives would be in danger, if he would bid them fight; on the other hand, his master would be humiliated and disgraced if he would allow the peasants to rob the *katchari* of the corns therein. He reflected for a while, went to the spot with a few guns, and fired a few blank cartridges in the air. The mob was panic-stricken and fled in all directions. Raicharan came weeping back to his lodging, as he said to himself, "Enough, and no more. How many human lives might have been lost in the fray. It is too bad. I must get out of it altogether." With these words, he made up his mind to leave the naughty world behind, and set out in quest of the Eternal.

THE DEPARTURE

*O, who will stay to the world long bound,
Where injustice, grief and cares abound!
Go forth, mighty soul, for you are free,
And hold High God and His world in fee.*

It was midday. Dinner was ready. It was left untouched. Raicharan would not think of taking meal. His heart was burning, and the fire was fanned by the religious fervor rising high in his chest. All world with its manifold charms was gone—the great fire burned them all, and reduced them to ashes. It was all void within and without—void on all sides around—emptiness and void—no solid ground to stand upon, nothing substantial which he could catch—everything slipping out of the fingers, and leaving him nowhere in the world. The world to him was but a shadow, with no substance in it—a spectral show of sorrows afflicting the sons of men. This void must be filled in somehow, or he would know no rest. The shades must be dispelled, or life itself was a burden, which none but fools would bear. He must go and solve the riddle, or die in the attempt rather than live in vain in the midst of the vanities of the world. But, where? Where should he go? How could he accomplish his purpose? He knew not; but go he must, and so he went. He threw himself on the waves of chance—and something told him from within he would be wafted across to the Godland and his God.

AT THE FERRY—DWARIK, THE FERRYMAN

He went on, took a cup of milk on the way, and so on and on, on foot for three days, till he came up to the River Gorhoi at the ferry-station of Nayaparha. The ferryman knew him. Dwarik marked him well, and his wild looks made him suspect that Raicharan Babu was going to leave them all for good. He began to cry, for he knew what a kind heart they would lose if Raicharan would not stay, and entreated him to stop and take some rest. He told him frankly that he could not find it in his heart to ferry him over, for they would take him to task for helping him to go away. Things would be as

bad as they were before and they would be undone if Raicharan would not stay with them, and so he should take pity on them, change his mind and go back to his house. Raicharan Babu spoke softly to him, unwrapped his shawl, and, handing it over to the ferryman, said that he would be coming back very soon and asked him to lose no time but ferry him over to the other bank of the river. The poor man could speak no more; he obeyed and took him across the river.

AT BHAVANIPUR—THE IMAGE OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

He was now on the other side of the river and he began to think where he was to go. It struck him that he should go first of all to Bhavanipur, in the district of Bagurha, witness the goddess Kali, and then do as She would bid him do. He went and was overjoyed to see the Image of the Divine Mother.¹ The Image was a Living Image,² Raicharan Babu determined to stop there for some time and so he stayed on, and his meals were supplied from the guest-house attached to the temple.

¹ Amongst the Gaudiya Vaishnavas the worship of deities other than Bhagavan Sri Krishna is forbidden. Even the *Gunavataaras*: Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu are not regarded as independent objects of worship. For those who regard them as separate and independent objects of worship there is the terrible curse of Bhrigu Muni, referred to in the *Bhagavatam* (4.2.27-28). But the attitude of contempt or indifference to other deities is condemned (*Haribhakti-vilasa*, 7.119-120). It is maintained that deities like Shiva and Kali or Durga can be worshipped in so far as they are themselves Vaishnavas, or worshippers of Sri Krishna, and in so far as they are helpful in the service or realization of Krishna. In regard to Durga, however, it should be noted that the Durga of the phenomenal world is different from the Durga of the transcendental world. The former is a manifestation of *Maya-shakti*, the External Energy of Bhagavan, in which inhere the three *gunas* (strands)—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, which cause the creation and destruc-

tion of the phenomenal world (*Bhakti Sandarbha*, 285). The latter is a manifestation of *Svarupa-shakti*, the Intrinsic Energy of Bhagavan, which is above the three *gunas* (*Bhakti Sandarbha*, 285). It is the *Lila-shakti*, or the *shakti* that contrives the divine *lila*. It is, therefore, called *Yogamaya*. The Vaishnavas worship *Yogamaya*, because no one can enter the divine *lila* without the mercy of *Yogamaya*. They have always sought Her help in their quest for Sri Krishna. Mother Yashoda worshipped Her in order that she might find Krishna as her son. The *gopis* worshipped Her in order that they might find Him as their husband. Raicharan Babu worshipped Her in order that She might help him find the guru, who could guide him on his way to Krishna.

- ² We have elsewhere spoken of the spiritualisation of the Image. The living Image is the spiritualised Image that would come and talk to men of spiritualised consciousness.

CHAPTER 3

THE VISION AND VOICE OF GOD

The screen is off—the world is gone,
 The din and clatter—there is none;
 The mind in-drawn—the calm of heart,
 The boundless sky, the soul a bird;
 The soul a fish in the waveless sea,
 Where no mortal sight nor sound can see.
 When lo! who comes?—‘It is the spirit of the Lord.
 Who speaks within?—‘It is the voice of God.

Time went on and Raicharan Babu came to be on a familiar footing with the *sevaits*—the staff in the service of the temple of Bhavanipur. They were all impressed with the respectable looks and gentlemanly behaviour of the new-comer, and they came to look on him with that love and regard, which was due to a distinguished visitor. They seemed disposed to do him any service they could. So, when Raicharan Babu asked their permission to be allowed to go through the *purascharan*¹ in the sacred hour of the solar eclipse, the

¹ This is a religious practice calculated to push us forward in the onward march of our spiritual life. It is generally held during the Eclipse, and consists of *Japa*, *Homa*, *Tarpana*, *Abhisheka* and *Brahmanabhajan*. The *Japa*—counting the name of God as many times as possible till the eclipse is over—is the most essential thing, for all the other elements may be, if necessary, resolved

permission was readily granted, and they were eager to make all possible arrangements for his convenience in any part of the temple, where he would be pleased to take his seat.

THE PURASCHARAN AND THE TRANCE

On the appointed day, the day of the full solar eclipse, Raicharan Babu took his bath and began the work in wet clothes in a sequestered corner, free from disturbances. He was soon in a trance, silent and speechless, motionless and still—the eyes uplifted and lost in the eyelid, the counting finger firmly fixed to the numbering digit—the very image of a yogi, lost in meditation. The hairs stood on end from time to time, and he trembled in every limb. The eclipse came and went, but he was there; and then, when the sun was up again, shining with a vengeance after the eclipse, he began to perspire; and the perspiration was so profuse that they feared he was going to die. We shall hear of these indications repeatedly in the course of our narrative—suffice it to say for the present that they are not the symptoms of a disease, but the external signs of a high order of spiritual development, which can be attained by devotees in the service of God.

A Brahmin took pity on him, and tried to make him drink a cup of milk. He dipped a piece of cloth in milk, wrung

into this one great fact of the whole operation. The *Homa* or offering of 'Habi' (pure ghee) to the fire—should be a tenth part of the *Japa*, the *Tarpana*—offering of Ganges water to the forefathers a tenth part of the *Homa*, the *Abhisheka*—bathing with the holy waters a tenth part of the *Tarpana*, and the Brahmanas to be entertained a tenth part of the *Abhisheka*. Thus, if 10,000 names had been counted during the period, only 1000 *Homas* are required, and 100 *Tarpanas*, 10 *Abhishekas*, and only 1 Brahmana is to be fed. If, however, circumstances do not allow, the other four may be done away with, and twice the number of *Japas* will serve the purpose. Thus, the other elements may sometimes be dispensed with, but not so the *Japa*.

it well, and dropped the milk into his open mouth. He regained his consciousness after he had drunk it off. But he could not walk. They helped him on to a neighbouring house, and the members of the Brahmin family took special care of him and requested him to stay with them till he was strong enough and fit for his spiritual adventures abroad.

THE DIVINE MOTHER APPEARED IN A DREAM AND SPOKE TO HIM

Raicharan Babu thanked them for their kind offer, but he could not comply with their request. He was "in the hands of God," he said, and must act up to the biddings of the Divine Mother who spoke to him in his heart of hearts. The Brahmin was very curious to know the secret, and pressed him to explain what he meant. "A few days ago," he went on to say, "I saw the Divine Mother in a dream; She asked me to leave my home, go to Bhavanipur and practise *purashcharan* in Her own place, and thus, She assured me, my heart's desire shall be fulfilled. I awoke and set myself to thinking how I could see my way to withdraw from the world and do as She bid me do. There came my family guru¹ to pay us a visit, and I asked him about the *modus operandi* of *purashcharan*, after which I showed him the palm—he knew something of palmistry—and he let me know that I was to leave the world very soon and that I had a bright prospect of spiritual life before me. This went very far towards the confirmation of my vision,

¹ Most families in India have a family guru. The family guru is the ceremonial guru, whose function is to preside over such ceremonies as *Annaprashan*, Sacred Thread and Marriage and to see that they are performed according to the *shastras*. He is different from the *sad-guru* or the spiritual guru, who has realized God and is competent to set and guide the individual on the path of God-realization.

and then came a golden opportunity—and all this I am sure was the work of my gracious Mother Divine—I availed myself of it, and She helped me thus to get rid of the bondage of the world. I left the world, but was at a loss to make out which of the two Bhananipurs She meant, for there was one near Calcutta, and another in the Bogurha district. I felt naturally inclined towards the latter and so I came here, and you know how She has taken me under Her care since I have come.”

THE VISION OF GOD, THE MOTHER

“Then I began the *purascaran*,” here he fell off in the middle of his discourse, and then, controlling himself went on, “it was drawing towards the close—the *japa*¹—when the Gracious Mother,” he cried like a boy and then began to speak in a broken voice, “She came and set Her Gracious Hand on my head as She said that my prayer was granted and that I was to find my guru on the banks of the Saraju, who would satisfy the hankering of my soul. I asked Her how I should be able to know him whom I had never seen before. She said that She would speak to him about it and that he should be awaiting my arrival—that he was a tall man with long arms reaching down to the knees, long drawn eyes stretching up to the ears, that his former name was Jogendranath Goswami of Khardaha and his present name was Sankararanya Puri, that he was not at all inclined to proselytize but that he would have me for a disciple only by Her special sufferance, and that he was no ordinary man but had the spirit of Nityananda Himself, Who was non-different from Sri Chaitanya² in his Evangelical mission in the world. So saying,

¹ *Mantra*-meditation while counting on beads.

² Sri Chaitanya is known in history as the last best reformer of Vaishnavism
(please turn to next page)

the Mother disappeared and then you know how I am here in your house. Bless me, brothers, and let me have your goodwill, so I may be able to carry out the orders of the Divine Mother." He stopped, and the Brahmin clasped him in a loving embrace and blessed him heartily and let him go.

THE DREAMS AND VISIONS OF THE PURE HEART ARE TRUE

"Is this true?" It may be asked, for skepticism is the order of the day. We say it is true, as true as truth can be, thrice true, this dream and vision of God. A whole host of questions will arise. "What is truth?" Truth strictly speaking, is that which endures, which suffers no change, and it is not to be sought in the fleeting shadows which make up the nine days' wonder of the world.

"Is not a dream an empty dream, a vision but a hallucination or an illusion of the mind?"—the psychologist would inquire. Our answer is that the dream-problem in psychology is as yet an open question. But the dreams and visions that come to a mind that is pure—absolutely free from all passions and desires—are not to be classed with ordinary dreams, for they are not, as they are often vainly supposed to be, the aberrations of a diseased mind, but the true experiences of a

(continued from previous page)

in the Kali-Yuga. He is the incarnation of Sri Krishna Himself, Who came down, in His Infinite mercy, to teach people, by His own example, the blessed way of *Prema-bhakti* (Divine Love), which leads to the supreme beatitude and bliss of perfect God-realization. With Him came Nityananda, the incarnation of Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna, and His non-different Self as the name itself suggests, which means Eternal Bliss. It was He Who was charged with the evangelical mission in the world, when Sri Chaitanya Himself was exhibiting the deepest mysteries of spiritual excellence in the coign of seclusion at Nilachala (Puri).

healthy mind, raised and elevated to the higher platform above the plane of consciousness.

THE IDEA OF GOD IS IRRESISTIBLE

"Is there a God?"—the materialist would exclaim, and he must have a large following among these pleasure-seeking people of the materialistic age. "Is there any necessity of conceiving the existence of a Supernal God, directing and controlling the affairs of men?"—the agnostic would ask. Certainly there is this God, whether we take cognizance of it or not. "But how can we take it on trust, because we do not see it?"—it may be urged. Well, we do take things on trust when we know we have every chance of verifying them at our own sweet will. Very few of us have actually seen the Aurora Borealis, and still we believe in it, because they tell us who have come face to face with this phenomenon and we can do the same if we would follow in their wake. So, it is with God. God is here, there and everywhere. We can know Him here and now, if only we would follow in the foot prints of the Great Masters that have come face to face with God. "Why should we take the trouble? Can we not do without it?"—We cannot. It is borne in on us. We cannot help it. It is something inherent in the nature of man—this idea of God and its quest. They have sought for it in all climes and in all ages, whatever the nationalities and races of men and order of civilization to which they belong. We sometimes flatter ourselves that we are men of nerve and can steer independently of the Rudder and the Anchor of God. But that is only for a time—only so long as we are young, in years and in wisdom, when we feel our life in every limb, when we lightly draw our breath and lightly tread the rosy path of life. But soon there comes a time when we come to open our eyes to the truth—when diseases

come that cannot be cured, when youth is gone which cannot be restored, when death threatens to take us away to 'the undiscovered land,' which no amount of ratiocination can help us to discern—why, then we perceive how helplessly in need we are of God who alone can help us always and without fail and give us the heart's ease in and out of the world.

GOD IS PERSONAL, IMPERSONAL, AND WHAT NOT?—THE DIVINE "HE" AND THE "SHE" DIVINE

"Well then, granted there is God, and that man is in need of God, is He a man that He would come and speak as we do? Is God personal or impersonal?"—the rationalist would go on. "And, pray sir, even if He is a man, is He a man or a woman? Some speak of 'the Father that is in heaven,' some speak of the 'Divine Mother.' Is He a father or a mother or shall we say both?" The clever youngster would put in—God is what He is—Personal, Impersonal, and what not? The Grand Principle of Infinity and Eternity, where the seeming contradictories are all reconciled into the One Harmonious Whole of Being. There runs the popular story of the doll of salt that went to fathom the depth of the sea—the poor doll was dissolved and lost itself in the attempt to gauge the capacity of the mighty deep. Man finds himself in much the same predicament, when he tries to judge of the Infinite God with the help of his finite intelligence. He may honestly inquire into the Truth, but he should never pretend to judge and decide. 'Knock and it shall be opened.' Man should exert himself to the uttermost to know his God, and God in His infinite mercy shall reveal Himself to man. God is personal and impersonal as well. But He is basically personal. He has infinite forms and the impersonal form is one of them. His highest, most perfect, most beautiful, most playful and the

most loving and lovable form is Sri Krishna. His impersonal form is but the divine lustre of the body of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna is '*svayam bhagavan*'—God, as He is in His intrinsic Selfhood, as the *Bhagavatam* says. All other forms of God are His partial manifestations. He also manifests Himself as the multifarious world for the Divine purpose of His *Lila*¹—the exhibition of the Great Grand Love-Play of the worlds. He manifests Himself sometimes as the Man or the Woman, when He chooses to take a part in the play for the delight of the blessed ones, the co-actors and spectators on the arena of the universe. God is manifest as the Divine He or the She Divine, whenever the time is ripe for it, whether in the outer world or in the inner recesses of the hearts of the devotees.

WE NEED SPIRITUAL EYES AND SPIRITUAL EARS TO CATCH THE VISION AND THE VOICE OF GOD

So, God is the Man or The Woman Divine, and appears as such for the delight of the devotees. He can be seen and heard. We can see Him; not of course as we can see a tree or a man or a dog or a table for the matter of that—we cannot see Him with the eye of the flesh, but we can see Him with the eye of the Spirit. We can hear him; not of course in the tympanum of the auricular holes we call our ears, but we can hear Him in the Spirit's Ear. The poets speak of the Mind's Eye, the Reason's Ear, the Ringing of the Ears, and all the rest, and these ideas have been accepted. But the Mind's Eye can only visualize things actually seen with the eyes; the Reason's Ear can hear things obtained by reasoning on data supplied by the experience of the senses; the Ringing of the

¹The *Lila* is the *Nitya-lila*—the Eternal Loveplay of Lord Krishna and Gauranga. We shall have occasion to speak of it in detail later on.

Ears can apprehend things actually happening in the material world in far-off places. There is, however, such a thing as the Spirit, which is beyond them all—above all sensuous perception, imagination, judgment, reasoning, clairvoyance and the rest—which is beyond the things experienced on the plane of consciousness—which is felt only on the superconscious plane, when we are carried aloft on the wings of inspiration and intense concentration—in the transcendental state—the ecstatic trance—where the body is not, and the world is not, and the mind is not—but where there is Truth and Light—Love, Beatitude and Bliss—Eternal and Profound. Whoever has access to this is in the Kingdom of God. He has the spirit of God in him—the Spirit's eyes, the Spirit's ears. He—the blessed one—can see God and hear the Voice of God. Our Raicharan Babu found himself for the time being in this blessed state, when God appeared to him as the Divine Mother speaking in his heart and put him on the way to spiritual progress.

CHAPTER 4

THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLE

Wonderful he that gives,
Powerful he that receives it.

THE GREAT CHANGE

A great change came upon our hero since the memorable day when he, for the first time, entered into communion with the Divine Mother and experienced new life and ineffable joy he had never felt before. The able Zemindar of Mahishkola was gone—the wise counselor who was always consulted on momentous questions of Zemindari business and public affairs—and in his stead was found a boy, but larger grown, who would weep and weep, he knew not why. He shed tears for the tears came, he knew not what they meant. He shed tears and went his way as fast as his legs could carry him on.

He thought of only one thing and that was this: the Divine Mother told him he would meet his Master on the Saraju. He was on the tip-toe of expectation as he ran through the streets of Ayodhya, but his mind was tossed with waves of bright and hopeful as well as dismal and anxious thoughts. He was sure, for the Mother assured him, of the good fortune that was about to smile on him, but the next moment he remembered his master

was not willing to have any more disciples. Will the master have him? Perhaps not. Will he break his pledge for his sake? He was no ordinary man; who can shake his purpose? But, O the Mother! She had said She would speak to him. She can make the impossible possible, She can change his mind and make him take pity on poor Raicharan. But then, how could he know him when he met the master? The mother described his person—he reflected and revised the fine form and graceful features of the worthy person as he expected to see him when he made his appearance.

AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER

He was absorbed in a profound contemplation of the image of his master, when, suddenly he found the saint entering the wood with the wooden bowl in his hand after finishing his ablutions in the holy water of the Saraju. He saw Raicharan, and said, smiling, "Well, are you come, my child? You are welcome. I was waiting for your arrival." Raicharan ran to him and fell at his feet. The saint laid his hand on his head, blessed him, took him by the hand, and led him to his hermitage.

A few paces from the Saraju, and he found himself in front of a poor cottage hemmed in by tall trees around. It was a sequestered nook, which presented quite a neat appearance with the *tulasi-mancha*¹ in the forefront and a nice little garden on one side of the yard. There was a stillness in the air and a spirit of sanctity on the spot, which naturally reminded Raicharan of the Naimisharanya,² where the *Rishis*³

¹ It is the custom to raise a mound of earth and plant the *tulasi* thereon, for it is a sacred plant, which is to be worshipped daily with holy water, and as such it is to be kept out of the way of all defiling and desecrating influences.

² This was a holy forest in the heart of India, hallowed in the name of Lord
(please see next page)

met and conversed about the nature and worship of God.

RAICHARAN AND THE ATTENDANT DISCIPLE

The saint entered, and a disciple rushed forward to wash his feet with water. That done, he spoke not a word but stepped quietly into the cottage, and the disciple blocked the entrance behind him. Raicharan Babu offered his *dandavat*¹ to the attendant of the saint, and the latter, doing the same in return, took him to a neighbouring tree and asked him about his health, for he said he had heard from the saint that he was unwell. Raicharan Babu was curious to know what the saint had said about him before he came. His new acquaintance told him "Gurudeva was rapt in contemplation on the day of the solar eclipse, when suddenly he exclaimed, 'How fortunate, O how fortunate!' As he came out of his trance, I inquired who that fortunate soul was whom he saw in the blessed state. Gurudeva replied, 'A man was performing *purasharan* on that day, and the Divine Mother was pleased to direct him to come to me. Thus the Mother did me a favour and a disfavour at one and the same time—a favour, for She appeared to me in person, a disfavour because She

¹ The word means 'Like a rod'. There are different ways of making obeisance. Sometimes we nod, sometimes we bend low, as also we kneel down, and fall prostrate down on the eight limbs, as it is said, to show our deep veneration for the object of our adoration. This last form of obeisance is meant, when we are said to offer our *dandavat* to any person or thing, for verily, then we look, with the body fallen prone on the ground, like a straight rod lying thereon.

(from previous page)

Vishnu, and this has been made, in some of the *Puranas*, the seat of the assemblage of saints, who gave themselves up to God and godliness.

³ The *Rishis* are the men of God-realization, who lead godly lives, think holy thoughts, speak of God and God alone and act up to the biddings and willings of the Lord.

forced me to break my vow.' 'The fortunate soul,' he continued, 'would render great service to the world, and he is in the good graces of *Yogamaya*, who would in Her infinite mercy take him straight into the *lila*.'¹ He also said 'He would be coming soon.'" Now that Raicharan was come, the disciple was sure he came in fulfilment of the vision of his master. Raicharan Babu was simply overpowered. He burst into tears, as he said, "O how kind! How merciful to the woe-stricken and the weak, the gracious Lord! He has seized me by the hair, so to speak, and brought me here. Bless me, brother, that I may be allowed to sit at the feet of the master."

THE INITIATION

Presently, they heard a voice from within the cottage—it was the voice of the master, bidding the newcomer to take his bath. Raicharan was only too glad, for he felt the blessed hour of initiation was at hand. He ran to the Saraju and performed his ablutions in the holy water of the sacred river, and when he returned, the master ordered his attendant to help him to be equipped with the *tilaka*² and the *kanthi*.³

The preparations being over, the master was seated with his eyes closed, in close communion with the Lord of Love—his eyes, the fountain of sweet tears, flowing out in constant streams down the cheeks, the chest, and all over, wetting the

¹ The pastimes of the Lord and His devotees.

²⁻³ These are some of the secondary operations of the Vaishnava initiation. The *tilaka* consists in the bearing of marks, of sandal paste or of *gopi-chandan* (the holy earth of Sri Vrindavan), on the different limbs, the paste being hallowed by the utterance of the Holy Names of the Lord in the course of the smearing process. The *kanthi* is made up of small beads of the *tulasi* plant, which is a herb having power to yield, by contact, spirituality and devotion (*bhakti*) to the person who wears it on his body.

clothes and the ground beneath. The tears were potent tears; they served to spread the blessed contagion of Love from man to man, and affected them both who were sitting near by. All the three were weeping—weeping for joy—out of the fullness of a heart overflowing with Love Divine. It was a sight for the angels to see—the sight of the love of God in flood over all—men, beasts and birds, trees and creepers, rocks and stones and all things else in the entire neighbourhood of the place. It is no exaggeration to describe the scene as we have done, for really the familiar things and common objects of Nature are transformed and transfigured under the influence of a God-intoxicated man. Raicharan wept and gave out piteous cries, as he tumbled over the feet of the master. O, what a cry! He knows who ever heard him cry—the stocks and stones themselves would be melted with pity to hear him cry!

Then the master raised Raicharan and made him sit in front of him, after which he bent forward and breathed the *mantras*¹ into his ears. They were so many living things, it would seem—each and every syllable blown into his ears—they set up a struggle in the entire frame, and would come out, so to speak, through the pores of the body, for so it seemed when the hair stood on end like the bristles of a porcupine, He was quaking from time to time, and that so vehemently that the saint could hardly hold him still as he clasped him to his chest.

The master himself would not find it in his heart to let him go after the *mantras* were imparted to him. He held him on and wept over him. Behold! O, behold the master and the disciple in each other's arms—their chests flooded over with tears of love—trembling in every limb and saying, "O blessed!

¹ The *mantras* are potent utterances. They are inseparably associated with God. Properly taken, they bring us face to face with God.

blessed am I! Thrice blessed for this shower of mercy from on high!" It was long till the master gently dissociated himself from the disciple, who was lying still and motionless, apparently in an unconscious state while his friend was chanting fervently aloud the *mahamantra*, the blessed Name of the gracious Lord:

*"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare."*

It is not a mere sound—this Initiation in the true sense of the term—a sound made by one and heard by the other, nor a formal ritual observed in good faith with uncertain results to come off in the far-off future, but a positive, palpable transmission of spiritual energy, which makes itself felt—then and there and without fail—in the pulsations of a new life and the thrills and throbs of new joy hitherto unfelt in the ways of the world. It blesses him who gives and him who receives, and marks the beginning of a new page of existence, which is altogether different from the old way of living the worldly life. Wonderful must be the guru, one who is a man of realization himself, and powerful must be the disciple—fit to receive and contain this immense influx of spiritual energy from that great reservoir of truth and love—to make the process a success.

Raicharan Babu was, as we have already pointed out the worthy disciple of the worthy master; and, though overpowered by the first shock of the new experience for a time, he quickly recovered and regained his consciousness, when the master undertook to teach him the guiding principles of his new life, which promised to take him to the Land of Eternal Light and Love.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEACHINGS

Have you got a treasure? Know how to keep it.
 The robbers are prowling; they are out to steal it.
 The Passions within and Temptations without.
 Learn how to fight them and put them to rout.
 God's grace thy helmet—come, put it on;
 His dear one's blessings thy amulet strong;
 The commandments thy weapons, wield them well,
 You carry off the palm, as many can tell.

Preceptor: Peace, my child. Cherish the treasure you have got this day, and you shall know what Blessedness is—here, in this life.

Pupil: Shall I? O, shall I? I do not know how to thank you, Sir, for the favour you have done me. Thanks are powerless, words are too weak to express the overwhelming sense of gratitude that bends me down to your gracious feet. I had been walking in darkness so long, and now, by your grace the light has come. Teach me, father, how I should conduct myself to wend my way to the Land of Light.

SEE GOD IN EVERYTHING; REGARD YOURSELF AS
 THE LOWEST OF ALL

Preceptor: Listen to me, child, and lay to your heart these

fundamental principles of religion. God is in everything—Lord Krishna manifests Himself in all these various forms that make up the world. Krishna appears in these different garbs and vestments, so to speak, but it is Krishna and nothing but Krishna in them all, and you should pay your respects to them even as you should to your God.¹ Man or beast, or a bird, a reptile, or an insect for the matter of that every animate thing that comes about you has the spirit of God within, and you should bend low and offer your worship as you meet them on your way. Be humble, and never speak ill of anyone, be he who he may. Consider yourself the lowliest of beings—lower still than the common grass they tread under their feet, and treat everyone with deference and respect—with the veneration, I should say, due to the high God, who is in them. So shall you develop your spirituality and keep clear of the sins and stains that soil human life and lead it astray.

Pupil: One thing I do not understand. May I ask you to make it clear to me?

Preceptor: Assuredly. Come, what's it?

Pupil: You say that God is in everything, and that I should be humble, never speak ill of anyone, and pay my respects to all, for God is in them all. But if He is in everything, He is in you, and He is in me, as He is in others too. Is He not? Then, who is going to respect whom? I do not see. Where am I, if God is the thing of things?

Preceptor: Thank you, dear boy. I am so glad that you raise this question. You take your stand on Truth—in the King-

¹ Krishna in the form of Paramatma is immanent in every being.

dom of God, one should say—when You say so. It was just in this strain that Brahma, the Creator of this world, sang as He bowed low to the Supreme Lord:

*"My respects to Thee, my respects to Me,
To Thee they are due, and due unto Me;
For, who is there—master, servant all—
Who else but Thee, for Thou—Thou art all?"*
—Skanda Purana

But Brahma, you know, is in Eternal Light, while you and I move about in the world of *Maya*, which veils the Light and darkens our vision. We come to be in the Light at times, when we are lost in contemplation. But we are not so always, and when we come out of it, there stands this 'I' and the world of senses, which is likely to distort our vision of God, and then we need to refresh our minds every moment of our life with the memory of the God of Light, who pervades and permeates the universe—Paramatma. It is so difficult to get rid of this 'I'—this misconception of the self almost inseparably associated with the body and the world of senses—when we open our eyes and mix and mingle in the world—it is next to impossible, one might say. It is for this reason that this 'I' is to be laid low and subjected to constant worship of the memory of God even in the midst of our intercourse with the world. Thus, humility would serve to bring us face to face with God even when we walk about with our eyes open, and then there will be no chance of entering into the affairs of man, of strutting and fretting in a vainglorious manner, denying the Godhood and speaking ill of others, which lays the axe at the root of all spiritual progress in life.

Pupil: I think I see it now. It is so charming—your exposition

of the virtue of humility and open-eyed godliness. Will you go on, and let me hear more?

BE KIND TO ALL: KINDNESS MEANS SERVICE OF LOVE RENDERED TO GOD IN MAN

Preceptor: Yes, in one word, you should be kind to all creatures, relish the Name of the Lord and give yourself up to the service of the Vaishnavas.¹ This is religion, and it should be practised wholeheartedly throughout the whole course of your life.

Pupil: By your leave, Sir. You say that I should be humble and respectful to all creatures, and then you say I should be kind to them all. How can I be kind to them if I am to hold them superior to myself? Kindness, I think, always flows from a higher to a lower level. And if I am really the lowliest of all creatures, I do not see how I can think of being kind to them.

Preceptor: Yes, my child, you are right if the word 'kindness' is taken in the ordinary sense. They meet a poor man in the street, and they would give him something to remove his wants, and sometimes even with the hope that they might get much in return for the little they give away. Little do they

¹ The word literally means, 'Worshippers of Vishnu.' Vishnu is the One Eternal Principle that pervades the worlds. It is the principle that furnishes the common back-ground of all the religions. So, in the wider sense, every man who is truly religious is a Vaishnava. But in the special sense, it means the worshipper of Vishnu, the God with the four hands, bearing the conchshell, the *Chakra* (disk), the *Gada* (club) and the *Padma* (lotus flower)—the Preservative Principle of the Universe—and more specially, it means the worshipper of Krishna, the Eternal Godman of Eternal Vrindavan.

think at the time that they cannot remove wants even if they wish to do so—they cannot alleviate the sufferings of men who are doomed to suffer in the world; and that those who give in anticipation of a greater return are mere traders in charity and not charitable in the proper sense of the term. This is mechanical charity, one might say, and not kindness, which always implies a deep sympathetic feeling—a spontaneous outpouring of the heart. True kindness is inseparably associated with love, and it expresses itself in loving service, because love can never brook to see its beloved ones in distress and naturally runs to give them succour and relief. This is kindness and charity in the proper sense of the term. The Sanskrit word, '*Daya*' has been taken to mean 'unification of hearts,' and it is love, and nothing short of love, which feels for others, because it is in its nature to feel for them. It means love and service, which you should render to all creatures as you naturally would to your God, who is in them. It is a natural overflowing of the heart in loving service bound to the Lord, which finds vent in the loving service to the God in Man and in all creatures besides. Come now, do you think it is incompatible with the idea of humility, now that you know the true significance of the term? What do you think my child?

Pupil: Really, I think not. I come to perceive that it is not without a trace of self-conceit and vanity that men think of doing good to the world, for true kindness is not constrained, but a natural sentiment with the humble servants of the Lord—it is loving service to God, Who is in man.

Preceptor: Quite so, my dear. And this loving service may be rendered in diverse ways. But the highest service is spiritual service, which comes first and foremost in the list of services

that can be rendered to mankind. You give them food and drink, it is well and good; you give them learning, it is better. But the best of gifts is religion, and the highest service lies in the revelation of God to the blindfolded eyes of the suffering sons of men. And even this service is to be rendered in a spirit of humility, and not with a patronizing air, for otherwise you will multiply the evils of life, instead of serving to mitigate the miseries of the world. When it is given to you to carry the message of God to your brother man, you teach him to take the Name of God and receive the Spirit of God, and he adores you with all his heart. But then, you must remember that if you teach him this and that he also teaches you to put implicit faith in God and adore Him with all the devotion and ardour of love. If he thinks you are a guide to him, you have your own reason to think he is a guide to you. Similarly, if a man pays respect to you as a *sadhu* (a saint) you should think that he is a true *sadhu*, not you, because he attends only to your virtues and not your vices, while in your case it is the vices, the faults and weaknesses of people that catch your attention more than their virtues, and in this way he teaches you not to look at the vices of people and he is your *shiksha-guru*.¹

ALWAYS REPEAT THE MAHAMANTRA

Pupil: To the next question, Sir, if you please. God has so many names. Which of His Names should be taken by man to make the most of his life?

Preceptor: God has made so many names, and breathed His omnipotence into them all. He is so kind to suffering humanity.

¹ Guru who teaches, but does not give *mantra*.

But, you see, there is such a thing as *Yuga-dharma*,¹ and the scriptures tell us that the saving grace of the Lord in the Kali-Yuga² lies in the *mahamantra*,³ which should be taken, in whispers and aloud, in season and out of season, with the flight of the minutes, with the heavings of the breath, walking, sitting, lying, sleeping—in all the states and conditions and circumstances of life. And so we shall be with God ever and evermore.

SERVE THE VAISHNAVAS

Pupil: Then there is the third thing—the service to the Vaishnavas. How can I serve them if I have no money? The recluse, who does not earn, is without resources for their entertainment. How can he serve them?

Preceptor: Why, he can also serve in his own way. Suppose, the mendicant is going to offer what he has got by begging to his Lord, when a hungry Vaishnava comes to him and offers to be his guest. He should at once offer half of the *prasada* to his guest and if a second guest appears, he should offer half of his half share to the newcomer, and so on. Even if these are wanting, cool, refreshing draughts of water, seats of *kusha*-grass, and sweet words would serve the purpose. Besides, the sick might be nursed, the thirsty supplied with water, the blind led by the hand, the dead helped with cremation, the

¹⁻²⁻³ There are four *Yugas*—cycles of creation—viz., the Satya, the Treta, the Dvapara and the Kali. The present *Yuga* is the Kali-Yuga, when the world is full of sins and sinners. The *Yuga-dharma* is the special way—the characteristic path of salvation for the men of the particular *Yuga*. This *Yuga-dharma* is different with the different *Yugas* and in the Kali-Yuga it consists in the constant reiteration of the *mahamantra*, which appears in an earlier part of the work.

afflicted comforted, and the ignorant illumined with the knowledge of God—and all this service is within reach of men, who have no money; for money, after all, is of but little help on the path of true religion and godliness.

Pupil: Now, I see it all. Pass on, if you please, to the further injunctions I must follow in life. But one thing more, before we proceed. So then I love and serve all creatures generally, for their good and mine, and I serve the Vaishnavas particularly, because they alone can give me the Spirit of God then and there and at their own sweet will. Am I right?

Preceptor: Yes, you are. The true Vaishnavas are the walking temples of the Lord. You worship them and worship God. Yudhishtira¹ said to Vidura:²

*"You sirs, you devotees, always with the Lord,
Ye are the holy shrines walking on the sod;
For you make the shrine where God resides,
You carry Him thither—in your chest He hides."*

—Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.13.10

THE SIX VERITIES—BUT ONE, FOR THEY ARE ONE
WITH GOD

The Vaishnava, the true worshipper of God, is one with God. And not only that; the Scriptures, the Holy Image, the Spirit or Form of God, the Holy Name, the *Mantra*, the Guru, and the Vaishnava—all are but one, one with God—God Himself manifest for the salvation and beatification of the world.

¹⁻² These are two of the characters in the *Mahabharata*. The former is the pattern of a virtuous king, the latter an ideal devotee.

Pupil: Help me, father, I cannot follow. I am so dull. I do not understand how the six things can be conceived as one.

Preceptor: Consider them one by one, and you will see into the paradox of the thing. The Scriptures give you an idea of God, the Holy Image inspires you with God-vision—of course, if you have learnt to use 'The Spirit's Eye,' which is not exercised by ordinary men. The Name of the Lord bodies forth the Lord, and so does the *Mantra*. The Guru imparts the Divinity as he touches the disciple, and so does the Vaishnava with his look, with the dust or the wash from off his feet, with the remains of his tasted *prasada*, or a word of blessing. Here, we should see that these things could not have possibly evoked and transmitted the Spirit of God, if God was not in them; for, nothing can come out of nothing; and if God-vision comes out of each and every one of these things, there must have been God in each and every one of them; and so they are all one—though apparently so many—and one with God. Then there is the seventh thing—the *mahaprasada*, which has puzzled the thoughts of men. No distinction of caste, color, or creed is to be observed when we take this thing—the thing duly offered up to the Lord. Go to Puri, and you will come face to face with this truth in the *ananda-bazaar*¹—the Mart of Bliss. The idea is, that, when you take it, you are at least for the time being uplifted into the kingdom of God, where there is but One and That one is God—the Spirit-Food is of this supreme efficacy to uplift the soul into the kingdom of God, for the Spirit-Food is no other than the Spirit of God. Shall I go on? Can you follow, child?

¹This is the name of the market within the precincts of the Temple of Jagannath, where the *mahaprasada* is sold.

Pupil.: Yes, father; I would like to hear you till the end of my life. Go on, if you please.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Preceptor: And so I will, because I have something more to tell you by way of instruction. Look here, you must never wound any one by your action, or your speech, or even your thoughts. And then, you must not think what other men would say when you follow the tenets of your religion. For, dependence of any kind is weakness; and if you will depend on the opinion of the hydra-headed monster of the world, you will end in doing nothing, my child, on the way of spiritual progress in life. The next thing I would like to impress upon you is that you should never try to deceive people by passing for a recluse and a saint. Then, the last and by no means the least in importance, the first and last thing of all true religions in this fallen age—the *sankirtan*—the loud choral of Krishna is the one thing indispensable for the weak and restless creatures of the Kali-Yuga.

So, then, to sum up, these are the ten commandments, so to speak, which you should grapple to your heart with hooks of steel, and then you may go on as smoothly as ever and attain the goal you have at heart:

*Be humble, more than the common grass,
And tolerant like the tolerant tree,
Respect them all, never respected be,
So sing God's Name in the holy mass.
Be kind to all, and relish His Name,
Serve His devotees, the Gurus—the guides,
The Mantras, Scriptures, the Image besides,
The Prasada as one—and play the game.*

*Pass not for a saint—'tis aping for a name;
In thought, speech or action never give pain;
Shun opinion, and sail on the solemn main
To the Blessed Land of God and His devoted train.*

There are these commandments in all the forms of religion extant in the world. But they are not the same, though religion is one and the same in all these different systems. Religion is the Science of God and Godliness, and God is One, though He is approached from different lines in the different systems. There are differences, and these differences only show the successive stages of development in the spiritual life and the varying degrees of comprehension of the Divine Ideal of Perfection they are all striving to attain. Think and weigh, and judge for yourselves; and dissensions will come to an end, as the Harmony of Religions would appear.

GOD-INTOXICATION

The new disciple was in great joy at the feet of the master in the hermitage. He had drunk deep of 'the cup that cheers, but inebriates not,' and he was cheerful as he had never been before. Or, shall we say he was inebriated with delight? Yes, yes, intoxicated indeed—'God-intoxicated'—maddened, one might say, with love of God, for he behaved like a mad man after his initiation by the master. He was transformed, and to him the world itself was transformed. The trees and the creepers, the beasts and the birds, the super-annuated sun overhead, the blue sky, the river flowing by, the rushing wind, the common earth—all seemed 'apparelled in a celestial light'—'the glory and the freshness of a dream.' He could not contain himself for sheer joy. He saw God in everything that

met his eyes, and he was out of his mind—playing in the sunshine of the super-mind—the spirit of the Lord of Love. The days came and went as before—he knew not how they fled. Sometimes he would speak—he hardly knew what. Sometimes he would exclaim—utter the Names of the Lord aloud—and then he would topple and tumble, roll and toss on the ground over and over again, and blanch himself with the sacred dust of the hermitage. And then he would rise to his feet and clasp this thing or that, animate or inanimate, whatever came in his way, and hold it fast to his bosom with all the ardour of love and affection due to his Lord—the Lord of Love. At times he would laugh, then he would weep, and then he would dance and sing by himself for hours together.

THE DIVINE MANDATE: THE SEAL AND WARRANT

So he was passing his days in Ayodhya, when one afternoon the master took him aside and launched into a conversation, which was to cast him adrift for the second time in his life—this time under the positive, palpable direction of his guide and his God. "I have something in my mind"—the master began, "'tis an impulse from within—a bidding of the Lord. So it must be done. You need not stay with me any longer. You must set out on your mission and spread the Name of the Lord far and wide in the world."

"Excuse me, father. I thought of clinging to your feet and serving you to the last day of my life."

"That is not to be, my child; and so you must give up that idea and make up your mind to shoulder the task, God has been pleased to impose on you. You say you want to serve me. But what is service but doing one's pleasure? I tell you I shall not be better pleased with anything else. If you look upon me as your spiritual friend and guide, you cannot but choose to

obey me. If you really think you owe anything to me, I shall be amply repaid if only you would act up to the bidding of the Lord. Come, be a good child and do what I say."

"Thy will be done, my Lord, your humble servant I. But, the task is so great, and I am so small. Instruct me, father, and empower me to accomplish the mighty deed you put me to."

"O, it is done, my child. Fear not, and set to work. You are in the hands of God. He will be with you and lead you on. I have said enough; bear it in mind and act accordingly."

THE PARTING COUNSEL

"But one thing more; I tell you this as my parting counsel before I give you leave to go abroad. Accept no pittance, offered by worldly men. Take what chance may bring to keep you alive, beg not for alms. Partake not of anything before it is duly offered up to the Lord. Keep good company, always and without fail."

"But, how can I distinguish? What is the test of good company?"

"In the first place I must remind you of what I had told you the other day in connection with humility and open-eyed godliness. Yes, all men are good in as much as the good God is in them all. They all are better than you, you are inferior to them all, and so you must respect them all. But though you respect them all, you must keep aloof from those that are hopelessly attached to women as also from those that turn away from God. Then again you must not just at present mix freely with those that tread not the same way with you to reach the Godhead, for then you may lose your way in the wandering mazes of aimless journeyings and never reach your God at all. Heed it well, for bad company shuts out your eyes to the good God within and without. Better no company at

all, if you cannot get good company, for then you can safely seek the company of His Name, God's Image Divine, and the scriptures which speak of God.

THE SCRIPTURES

"It is a vast ocean—boundless—the scriptures. Which of them should I turn to? Which would help me best?"

"Well, so they are, my child. It was in the beginning of creation that God Govinda, the Prime God, revealed the Vedas¹ to Brahma, the Creator of the worlds. In course of time these Vedas were extended by way of commentaries and illustrations into the infinite mass of scriptures—the *Upanishads*,² the *Darshans*,³ the *Eighteen Puranas*,⁴ the *Tantras*,⁵ the *Samhitas*,⁶ the *Upapuranas*⁷ and the rest. Then Brahma thought they were too numerous to be mastered and followed by the weak minded men of the Kali-Yuga, and so he condensed them all into the *Srimad Bhagavatam*⁸ of the compact four *slokas*⁹ which he communicated to his son, Narada. Devarshi Narada¹⁰ explained these four *slokas* in a hundred *slokas* which were received by Vyasadeva.¹¹ The latter exposed and expounded the truths in eighteen thousand *slokas*, which are handed down to us as the Great *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Then our reverend Krishnadas Kaviraja abridged

1-8 These are the names of the scriptures.

9 Sanskrit verses.

10 'Narada' is the name of the son of Brahma, the Creator of this world—not born of the womb but of the mind conceived—who wandered about, spreading light and love wherever he went—one of the primordial *Rishis* or great saints.

11 'Vyasadeva' is the name of the great *Rishi*—the heaven-born author, who classified the Vedas and composed the eighteen *Puranas* for the spiritual welfare of the world.

it within a narrower compass and gave us his *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*, after which Sri Narottama Thakura compiled his 'Prayer-book' and '*Premabhakti Chandrika*' and thus brought it within easy reach of the common people of the fallen age. We are so weak, so dull, short-lived and passionate, how can we possibly dare to dabble in the bottomless seas of the scriptures? It is enough if we can attend closely to these three books, and the '*Manasa-shiksha*' to train our minds in the art of God-realization.

"But then, there is no end of differences among the interpreters of the scriptures. Some explain in one way and others in quite different ways. How can I get at the exact meaning of the scriptures?"

"At the outset, make it a point to contemplate Sri Gauranga before you are going to read, and then the inspired author of the work, and then Sri Gauranga Himself would help you from within and you shall know the truth, wherever doubts will arise."

"Will you not let me have my rosary, father, before I go? Or, how shall I count my beads?"

"No matter. You need not buy one from the market. Go to Navadwip, and you shall have it there. Sing God's Name aloud, for it is better. Singing aloud is hundred times more efficacious than the muttering of His Name."

THE FINAL ORDER

Next morning the master got up at the *Brahma-muhurta*¹ and ordered his new disciple to make ready for the departure.

¹ It is the hour of early dawn—48 minutes before sunrise—when the Brahmin and the *sadhaka* (student) should rise and give themselves up to meditation.

"Go to the Saraju" he said, "and perform your ablutions. Stay for a day at Ayodhya, and visit the *vigrahas*¹ and then proceed to Benares, Gaya, Prayag, Mathura, Vrindavan and the other places of pilgrimage. After you finish visiting the shrines, go to Sridham² Navadwip, and after a short stay, go to Nilachala.³ You shall not see me again for some time to come. Go forth, God shall be your guide, and He will help you. More when we meet, when God wills it."

The disciple sank weeping down to his feet; the master raised him, embraced him heartily, and blessed him as he bade him good-bye. The disciple was reeling and tottering in the overflowing outburst of divine love as he went up to his spiritual brother and prostrated himself before him. "After all, the words of the master must be obeyed, my brother," said the brother, "and so you must go. A hearty farewell, brother, before you go." So saying, they parted, and never looked behind. So soft, so hard, the men that are above the world!

¹ These are the Images—the Spirit-forms of God—visible in holy places.

² The 'Sridham' is the place where God lives and moves and plays His part when He comes down on earth to grace His devotees and men of the world.

³ 'Nilachala'—or the Blue Mountain—was the old name of modern Puri. The Temple is something of the mountain indeed—it has so many layers of different heights in the successive stages of the ascent into the sanctuary.

CHAPTER 6

THE TWIN SOULS

They looked and knew the old familiar face,
 Those eyes, where their own love they could trace,
 They ran to be locked in a close embrace,
 And wept for joy in the hour of grace.

AT NAVADWIP

So our hero set out on his pilgrimage to the sacred shrines of the land and travelled far and wide till he came to Navadwip, the latest playground of the God of love, where He lived and played only five hundred years ago. Raicharan plunged into the Ganges at the Srivas Angan Ghat¹ and sat down on the bank, looking with longing eyes into the heart of the sacred stream and the blessed land, replete with the memories and associations of the exquisite melodrama of love mounted on the very same stage of the land and water presented to his view. He looked, and looked, and was soon lost in the contemplation of the scene—lost to the world—his eyes reddened with the outburst of love, his radiant face

¹ This is one of the descents into the Ganges at Navadwip. Here stood the Srivas Angan—the courtyard of Srivas—where Sri Chaitanya held his initial *sankirtan*-parties every night in Navadwip.

beaming with the blissful glow of fellowship and communion with the Lord of Love. There was something in his appearance at that time, which attracted the notice of the passers by, and particularly of one Jagadananda Das Babaji,¹ who took him to his own residence on the Manipur Road and gave him a solitary room for his free use and undisturbed meditation.

THE HERMIT IN THE GUISE OF A GENTLEMAN

Here he lived a life of abstraction, out of touch with the men of the world. He would speak but little and never stir out of doors. He bathed three times a day in the holy water of the Ganges, and took his frugal fare cooked by himself and offered up to the Lord, in the afternoon, and that only once in a day. He had little time to spare for idle conversation or elaborate preparation of food. He spent the whole day in the loud chanting of the Name of the Lord. Possessions he had very little. The only thing he cared for was the *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*, to which he would turn from time to time. He would open the book and begin to read, in a broken voice, and his eyes would redden and tears would pour. Sometimes he would laugh and sometimes cry like a child. Little did he care for what others would say to see him behave like a mad man. He was all by himself, swimming at pleasure in the sea of love. He was a hermit and a recluse in the guise of an ordinary man of the world. He took care that he passed for a worldling in the eyes of men. He would often appear decently dressed as he would set out on his visit to the

¹ Babaji—Literally 'Sire.' A term used to denote a Vaishnava, who has forsaken the world for the sake of God, and as such who stands in the position of a spiritual father to the erring sons of men.

Temple of Lord Gauranga. But the man was there—he could not hide it—the man of abstraction, ever on the look-out, as it were, for something he had lost, which is not to be found in the noise and tumult of the busy world—his pink eyes languishing with love, the tell-tale looks, as of one whose heart was full but the lips were sealed for want of a confidant fit to receive the gospel of love.

RAICHARAN BECOMES RAJEN BABU

So he lived on for some time, unknown and unknowable to those about him. He had changed—not only in his temperament, in his habits and dispositions, but also in his person, for the *purascharan* had changed his colour and complexion, so that he could not be recognized even by those, who had known him intimately in former years; and what was more, his name too, as chance would have it, or Providence we should say—his name too had suffered a change. He called himself Raicharan, his host managed to take it for Rajen, and so he passed for Rajen Babu and he was right glad that his former identity was altogether lost to the world.

MEETING WITH NAVADWIP

Now about this time, there came a young man, Navadwip Chandra Das, along with his family, on a flying visit to the sacred place of pilgrimage. He heard of Rajen Babu and felt an irresistible impulse to see him at his place. He was shown in—and lo! what a scene! No sooner did he set his foot on the floor of the room, than he felt himself carried away. Their eyes met, and they felt they were old familiar friends. They were in ecstasies, they knew not what they did. They shed tears, they flew into each other's arms. They stood motionless

for some time, locked in a close embrace, and then they toppled down to the floor, rolling and tossing on the ground. Presently, they jumped up, shouting the Name of the Lord, and danced merrily together. They were beside themselves with joy, and they set out clapping their hands and singing as they made for the Temple of Mahaprabhu:¹

*"Love Gauranga, say Gauranga, take Gauranga's
name O!
Whoever loves my Gauranga is my life and
soul O!"*

THE TWIN SOULS IN TUNE WITH EACH OTHER

They sang, they danced, and dancing ran through the streets, on to the temple and back to their lodgings, when the day was far gone and the midday sun was shining overhead. They were tired and covered all over with dust when they came. But they did not mind. Rajen Babu cooked his food, and Navadwip helped him. They dined together, and shortly after, they began reading the *Charitamrita*. The one was reading, the other listening—their eyes bathed in tears, hairs standing on end, and limbs quaking and quivering in the fullness of ecstatic delight. Sometimes they would laugh, when laughable matter was in hand, and split their sides with laughter; and sometimes they would weep, profusely and pitifully, through a pathetic scene in the course of their study. They laughed together, and cried together in sympathetic

¹ Literally, the word means, 'The Great Lord' or 'The Lord of Lords.' It is the name of Sri Chaitanya Himself, by way of distinction from His other selves—Sri Nityananda and Sri Advaita, as well as Sri Gadadhara and Srivas, who are also called Lords by the Vaishnavas.

communion with the Lord. It seemed they were but one in two—they had two forms but only one heart between them. What a meeting of rare souls was theirs! How deep, how perfect the union of their hearts! They became friends for ever, and would no longer part from each other for all the wealth of the world.

NAVADWIP FORSAKES THE WORLD TO LIVE WITH RAJEN BABU

Navadwip returned at nightfall to his family party and made them distinctly understand that he was not willing to go back to his house. His relatives were taken aback. They tried to dissuade him from his purpose. But all in vain. Remonstrances were of no avail. He conceded only so far as to accompany them home, but only to come back after a week and stay on with Rajen Babu, there in the sacred city of Navadwip.

So he was joined by his friend Navadwip, and afterwards by two other devoted souls—Krishnagovinda, and Rasmohan. What a heart of love was his! He would call them brother and win their hearts for ever! It was this natural sentiment of universal brotherhood that endeared him to all who came in contact with him—herein lay the secret of his power to engage their affections and spiritualise their lives for their salvation. We shall see how this acted as the cement of the evangelical edifice he raised in later life.

CHAPTER 7

ON WAY TO PURI

They started from Navadwip one fine morning—this blessed band of singers, in the service of the Lord—on their holy wanderings with the Name of the Lord on their lips, and marched off singing as they went.

THE MARCHING SONG: SRI CHAITANYA THE MIGHTIEST SAVIOUR

The song which they sang was an invocation of Lord Gauranga and His train of devotees, that came down with Him in His infinite mercy to reform and reclaim the sin-worn sons of men of the Kali-Yuga. The Kali-Yuga is the age in which we live, the last and the worst in the cycle of creation. Who can doubt that this is the worst, seeing that purity is a rarity in the world of to-day, and vice and immorality, irreligiousness and sin the insignia of high life in society? Hypocrisy is bred in our bones. Lust of flesh, lust of gold, and lust of power, are the ruling passions of our lives. Selfishness reigns supreme. Selfless sacrifice is scarce, and even if it appears in a few stray cases here and there, it is deemed folly and treated with derision and contempt. It is a fine world in which we live, we civilized men of the twentieth century—a world, enriched with a thousand devices of dehumanizing mills and machinery, equipped with powerful

means of destruction and slaughter of our brethren! Why, it is modern civilization, which is slowly but steadily and surely putting us in the way of destruction and death? Yes, yes, we are decidedly worse than we had ever been before. Who can save us from the impending ruin? We are deep down in the mire, so deep as we had never been before. Who can help us out of it? We are further advanced in the ways of sin and irreligion than we had ever been before. What power can win us back into the path of virtue? The greatest sinners we, who would be our saviour? Our saviour must be mightier far than those that have gone before—the mightiest that ever came to redeem the sinners on earth. And here comes Sri Chaitanya, the High God Himself in human shape, to wash off the sins and stains of the fallen men of the fallen age. He comes as a non-pareil of beauty, the like of which was never seen, and exercises the strongest weapon ever wielded to subjugate mankind—the irresistible weapon of boundless love. He comes attended by His chosen ones—His picked devotees, each one furnished with the same infallible weapon, each one having power to save thousands of sinners with a wave of this magical wand of love.

They were here to work out their mission—in flesh, and blood, only five hundred years ago, and they are here now—even now, for their mission is not yet fulfilled—invisible, but distinctly perceptible in the Name of the Lord, they have bequeathed to us for the salvation of our souls. It is no mystery, but a palpable truth—this feeling of their presence in the midst of the *sankirtan*, and sincere inquiry and careful experiment will bear it out.

THE BEATIFIC VISION IN THE COURSE OF THE SANKIRTAN

So, they were singing with all their heart, and lo! there

was Sri Gauranga dancing in their midst—Beauty's self decked out with sandal and flowers—dancing in every limb—the rolling eyes, the trembling lips, the flapping curls—hands, feet and all—waving and wavering, fluttering and quivering, skipping and tripping, in a thousand ways along with His devotees—Narahari and Gadadhara clinging to His sides from time to time to hold Him reclining in His languor of love, the capering Nityananda on his right, the thundering Sri Advaita in front, the humble Srivas and Haridas and countless others of hallowed name,¹ a vision of visions for the hankering souls! A maddening outburst of Love Divine! An ecstatic transport of joy profound—the pitch and perfection of revelation and God-realization!

THE SANKIRTAN PARTY IN PROCESSION

Thus they were marching and our Rajen Babu was leading. He had his own charming way of leading. As he marched he danced in *sankirtan*—the tall figure with the hand uplifted, one foot fixed perpendicularly on the other—and thus he ran for miles faster than the swiftest couriers on the way. So he was leading, and the three others were following, singing and dancing. They did not know where they were going. They were so attractive—this absent band of God intoxicated devotees—that they soon had a large following on their heels. New bands came and joined them. The children came and danced with them, and then the men, who left off their work and went along, then the old men, who shook off their lethargy and walked in their train, and then the women, who forgot the limitations of their sex, forgot their surroundings, forgot themselves, and mixed with

¹ All companions of Sri Gauranga.

the angelic band of self-forgetful devotees, emparadising the earth with their unearthly dance and celestial songs that carried them away, who came to look on and listen to them.

AT KALNA: THE STRANGE STORY OF THE LIVING IMAGES

So they went on till they reached Kalna,¹ where they stopped to have a look at the deities of Sri Nityananda and Sri Gauranga.

Now, these Images of Kalna have an interesting history, which we must not pass by. It was at the time when Sri Chaitanya was out on His journey from Shantipur to Nilachala that He came here, accompanied by Nityananda, to favour Pandit Gauridas with a passing visit on the way. The Pandit was hopelessly in love with Him. He could not bear to give Him leave when the hour of parting came. Life to him was simply impossible if Sri Gauranga went away. The Divine Man was melted with pity. He asked him to have Their exact likenesses² so that he might be comforted and persuaded to let Them go. The Images were made, but still the Pandit would not let Them go. So, the four stood in a line—the real Men of flesh and blood, and the two exact likenesses made of wood—and the Pandit was asked to choose the two he would like to have. The Pandit of course laid his hands on the living forms, and so They remained, while, strange to say; the other two walked away.³

The fact is that these Images are so vivid, so lifelike, that one cannot but be struck to have a look at them. What

¹ This is the name of the notable village they passed on their way.

² These were fashioned out of neem wood.

³ References—1) *Subal mangal*. 2) *Bhakti-ratnakara*.

wonder then, that these devotees were transfixed and entranced to behold the Images standing before them! They shed tears of joy as they looked—they uttered broken words of love and devotion, couched in the song of the *sankirtan*, and they wept as they sang of the Infinite Mercy of the Lord on His devotees. The elder was singing, and the others sang with him. He was singing extempore. So the *sankirtan* was going on. The verses came to him so swiftly that it seemed he was drawing upon memory and singing well known songs. So exquisite were the songs that they might well be taken to be the classical compositions of the ancient bards of Vaishnava literature. They were so sweet that they went straight into the hearts of the hearers, and so copious that they completely overpowered and overwhelmed the gathering on the scene. So they were singing and dancing, their eyes riveted on the radiant faces of the Lords in the temple, when a little boy four or five years old, who was dancing in the *sankirtan*, reeled and fainted away as he fell on the ground.

The boy was in a trance. Shortly after, he addressed himself to the party, as he said, "Look here, you must not tarry any longer, but proceed straight to Puri." He was not himself, it goes without saying, for he was a mere boy, who was not expected to understand what he said. He was on the supramental plane at the time—and it is not difficult in these days of mesmerism, hypnotism and spiritualistic seances to believe in the truth of the occult sciences—his voice had a ring of the voice of God, and the devotees took it in the light of a divine mandate, which they hastened to obey. Now they knew their destination and they sped on their journey to Puri.

Wearing a *chadar*¹ and a *dhoti*,² they started—their *karatala*s in hand, dancing and singing the Name of the Lord. When

¹ A sheet of cloth worn over the upper portion of the body.

² A sheet of cloth worn over the lower portion of the body.

they took their bath, they would wear the *chadar* till the *dhoti* was dried in the sun, and when a brother happened to have his *dhoti* worn out, one of the others would help him with half of his *dhoti* to remove his want. When evening came on, they stopped to rest, village or woodland to them the same; and food, what chance may bring—and so they went, perfectly happy and contented at heart.

They came to Sri Sakshi Gopal in the vicinity of Puri. The elder began his *sankirtan*—the same sweet diction, the sonorous voice, the flowing numbers, the same huge gathering in raptures over the divine entertainment. He began, as was his wont, to explain the history of the Image before him in extempore verses in the course of the *sankirtan*:

“Two Brahmins, one old and one young, went on pilgrimage to Vrindavan. The old Brahmin fell ill, the younger served him. Pleased by his service the older Brahmin promised to give him his daughter in marriage. When he returned home, in a place near Puri, he denied the promise. The promise was made before an Image of Sri Krishna in Vrindavan. So, the younger Brahmin went to Vrindavan and lay before the Image, fasting and praying that the Lord should go with him and give witness in his favour. The gracious Lord in the deity walked all the way behind the younger Brahmin and in His infinite mercy gave witness to the Brahmin’s promise.”¹

The by-standers saw all this and heard it all. They were simply charmed, and whispered among themselves, “Who are these blessed souls? Whence do they come? Who is he, the tall man towering above them all? The true likeness and stuff

¹ Ref.—*Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*. This may appear at first sight to be an unrealistic story. But before jumping to this conclusion, we shall do well to remember the immortal poets immortal lines: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy”.

of a Superman—the long arms, the gracious form, the sweet, smiling face—he has about him a heavenly air, which marks him out from the rest of mankind. He is undoubtedly the ‘Barha Babaji’—the head of the clan, and the others are his followers”. So he came to be called the ‘Barha Babaji,’ and we shall henceforth refer to him by this new name.

It was midnight. All was calm and quiet around. They were lying outside the temple. There came two persons, one white, the other gold-colored, and they sat near the head of Barha Babaji. The former said, “Listen, I come to deliver a *mantra*,¹ which you are to practise and proffer to anyone who would be willing to accept it.” So saying, he communicated to him the ‘Gaura-*mantra*’ of twenty two letters and disappeared. The night wore on and it was morning. But Barha Babaji was weeping all the while. He was out of his mind. He was shouting ‘Ha Nitai! Jay Nitai!’ dancing, whimpering, rolling and tossing on the ground. He told his companions what had happened to him. He clung to them and cried aloud. They tried their best to soothe him down. He soon came back to himself, and ran at full speed, crying ‘Ha Nitai! Jay Nitai!’ on his way to Nilachal, his companions following him. Men wondered at them and wished to inquire, but they were beside themselves with joy and would not rest till they had a look at the radiant face of the Lord of Nilachal.

COME ONE, COME ALL: YOURS IS THE BLISS OF ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNION WITH GOD

Come ye and feel—come, one and all. Come ye, the hapless,

¹ Each and everyone of the Manifestations of God has its own *mantra*—potent word, of power to reveal Him as He is.

tired of the world! Here shall you find rest and repose under the big old banyan of the Lord of Lords. Come ye, the happy, satiated with the pleasures of life! Here shall you find 'the perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.' Come ye, the scientists with an open mind! Here shall you find the Science of sciences, the primordial element at the basis of all being in the universe and beyond. Come ye, the psychologists! Here shall you find an exquisitely elaborate ultimate analysis of the psychical processes hitherto undiscovered in psychology. Come ye the philosophers, here is the mine of knowledge and Truth, which known nothing is left unknown. Come ye, the lovers, here is the ocean of love that would allay your thirst for ever. Come ye, the blessed ones! for ye the Lord is come, with the ambrosial cup of Divine Love in His hand. Drink deep of it and laugh and weep, dance and sing in a transcendental overflow of beatitude and bliss in Eternal Fellowship and Communion with God.

CHAPTER 8

THE BARHA BABAJI

Thou mountain of men, thou fountain of tears,
 Thou volcanic burst of ecstatic cheers,
 Nature's own poet, Love's own self,
 Thou sage of sages, thou seer of seers!
 Enchanting thy song, harmony thy dance,
 Embodied joy thou God's own man,
 Give us thy love, thy love of God,
 Soul's bliss and life eterne.

THE GREAT GRAND LAND OF THE GREAT GRAND GOD

At last they came to Nilachal,¹ the abode of the Lord. It was the land where the Great God was seated in state and meted out salvation to those who came to see Him. It was the Great Grand Land of the Great Grand God—great the expanse of water around, great the extensive roads within, great the vast blue sky overhead, great the gusts of wind from the sea, great the spacious temple of the Lord, great the stupendous Deities therein. The *chakra*² was in sight, they

¹ Another name for Puri.

² This is a circular ring of metal, the symbol of Vishnu attached to the spire of the temple overhead.

saw it from afar, and ran breathless to catch a glimpse of the Lord of Lords. Their hearts were throbbing with expectant delight as they darted across the dusty road. They found themselves at the Lion Gate,¹ and they fell prostrate in profound veneration for the Lord. They entered—they ascended the pile and presented themselves before the High God on the heights of the Mountain Temple² of Puri. They were in the *Jagamohana*,³ they could see the Lord—they were looking with fasted feasting eyes on the sweet effulgence of the Lord of Lords. Their hearts were full, and out of the fullness of their heart they began to sing. They were entirely lost to the world, lost in the depths of love of God, and their song drew the multitude of visitors to their side. A thousand voices joined in the *sankirtan*, a thousand others stood looking on and listening to the divine melody. It was a scene, the like of which was never seen during the last four hundred years of the Chaitanya era.

THE SANKIRTAN IN JAGAMOHANA

The worshippers and the guards stopped work and enjoyed the scene. Those who came to look remained to sing or hear the song. Some danced as they stood, some with hands upraised, some others huddled together and formed groups, dancing hand in hand, while others reeled from side to side and rolled in ecstasy on the hallowed ground. Words are weak, description beggars to portray the scene in its true

¹ The Lion Gate—the main gate, facing the east of the Temple of Jagannath.

² The Temple is something of the mountain indeed, for we have to ascend the stairs, layer by layer, before we can reach the spacious yard on which stands the Sanctuary of the Lord.

³ This is the great hall within the Temple, where the visitors take their stand to have a look at the Lord.

colors. We leave it to the readers to imagine the rest and enjoy the blessing of the blissful hour.

It was afternoon, the *Sringari-panda*¹ brought the garland of grace² and put it round the neck of the main actor on the scene. It was the hour of the *dhup*³ and the doors of the inner temple were closed. They were tired and sat down to rest. A thousand kinds of *mahaprasada* were brought and all sat down on the floor to partake of them. An old Babaji took a morsel and raised it to the lips of Barha Babaji. He accepted it in the midst of loud shouts of 'Haribol!' and all rushed in to offer their boluses to Barha Babaji. All invidious distinction was gone—distinction of caste, color, creed, position in society and pecuniary circumstances. It was all one universal feeling of bliss reigning in every heart. Some would offer eating, some would take food out of the mouth of another and eat themselves. The diversity of the world was sunk out of recognition, and the Grand Unity of Being was manifest on the scene. Such is the virtue of the true devotee, such the power of the Spirit in the Name and the Image of the Lord—such is the unifying, spiritualising influence of the *mahaprasada* duly offered up to the Lord.

AT GAMBHIRA

Now, after thus paying their homage to the "Stirless Jagannath"⁴—the Deity of the Lord of the worlds in the temple—

¹ The *Sringari Panda* is the chief of the worshippers entrusted with the daily service of the Lord.

² The Garland of Grace is the garland on the neck of the Lord which He is pleased to bestow on His dear ones as a token of the favour of His grace.

³ The 'Dhup' is the term for the *bhoga* service of the Lord.

⁴-(5: see next page) These are the expressions used by the devotees of Sri Chaitanya by way of distinguishing the God in the Image (Sri Jagannath) and the God Incarnate (who was Sri Chaitanya Himself).

they naturally thought of the "Stirring Jagannath"⁵—the Lord Incarnate in the person of Sri Chaitanya, Who lived and moved and played His part in the same city only four hundred years before. They inquired about the Gambhira,¹ and the aforesaid old Babaji, Sri Ramakrishna Das, offered to show them the way. This was the abode where Sri Chaitanya lived, and was living still, for the devotee knows that the *lila* is eternal, though invisible to mortal eyes. The devotees go there to see Him with spiritual eyes, and their hopes and desires are fulfilled. Barha Babaji was of course inspired, and so were his mates, with similar hopes as they went on their way, and sang as they ran through the street:

*"Where art Thou, O Gauranga dear!
To see Thee from Gauda² we come here.
Thy mooney face we haven't seen so long.
Come, let's see, or we die erelong.
What friend is here, will take us there,
Where Thou play'st with Nityananda dear?
Come, let us see Thy face, O dear!
We come to see Thee, for Thou art here."*

They entered, followed by a large crowd, and Sri Haribhajan Das Babaji, who was in charge of the sacred abode, took them to the coign of seclusion where Sri Chaitanya

¹ Gambhira was the sanctum of Sri Chaitanya during His stay at Puri. It is a small cell, inside the building of Kashi Misra, the then officer of Raja Prataparudra (King of Orissa), in charge of the supervision of the Temple of Jagannath, into which Sri Chaitanya would retire to avoid the noise and tumult of the multitude of men. It was in this cell that he passed the twelve years of His celestial God-intoxication in the company of Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Roy during the later years of His manifestation on earth.

² Gauda—another name for Bengal.

lived in retirement in the interior of the spacious dwelling. Barha Babaji came, and as he looked on the *kantha*,¹ used by the Lord, and touched it with his hand, he burst out into sobs and muttered in the fullness of his heart, "Have mercy Lord, on Thy humble servant, so may I serve the servants of Thy servants and rest under the peaceful shade of Thy Sheltering Feet." So saying he swooned away and fell down, when his companions hastened to help him and restored his consciousness. Then they visited the historic home of Sri Vasudeva Sarvabhauma,² and the Siddha Bakul.³

COMPLETE RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF THE LORD

Ramakrishna Das asked them where they meant to put up. The Barha Babaji said in reply that they were not anxious on that account for they were going to stay where the Lord would be pleased to keep them. At this, Balarama Babu offered to take them to his Thakura Barhi,⁴ while Ganesh Pattanayaka would conduct them to Dolmandapsahi, for he urged it was nearer to the Temple of Jagannath and more

¹ The words literally means 'the rags,' with which *sannyasis* are to cover their bodies.

² This is the name of the then illustrious leader of the Vedantist Sannyasis of Puri; who was held in high regard in the Temple of Jagannath, and who ultimately became one of the devout worshippers of Sri Chaitanya.

³ The Siddha Bakul was the place of retirement assigned to Thakura Haridas, the great Mohammedan devotee of Sri Chaitanya, where he could carry on his devotional practices undisturbed by the crowds of pilgrims in the vicinity of the Temple. It was so called because it was underneath a Bakul tree, and inhabited by the *Siddha-mahatma* (man of God-realization), who was so dear to the Lord. The Bakul may yet be seen, standing on the rind of the trunk, hollowed out by the ravages of the lapse of years.

⁴ The residence of God.

convenient in every respect. Ramakrishna Das Babaji was the oldest of them all, and he gave his verdict for the latter. So it was decided that they would take up their lodgings at Dolmandapsahi,¹ but not before they had taken their day's *prasada* at Balarama Babu's, who was henceforth to be the devout friend in the service of our Barha Babaji for all time to come. The one thing to be noticed in this connection is that our hero resigned himself thoroughly and depended solely on the dispensation of the Lord and he would never move an inch at his own sweet will, for his will was completely merged in the will of the Lord, and himself was no longer his but the Lord's.

THE VISION OF VRINDAVAN

Next afternoon, they set out, singing and dancing, on the way to the sea. They approached the shore; the sand-dunes were to be seen from a distance, and particularly the one that was bigger than the rest—the mount of sand, the *Chatak-parbata*,² as it is called—the same which in the former days inspired Sri Chaitanya with thoughts of Vrindavan,³ and occasioned the mighty outburst of devotional sentiment hitherto unknown in the world of mortals. Barha Babaji discerned it from afar and fainted away in the sudden accession of ecstatic delight. His companions tended him carefully, and he soon recovered, ascended the sand-hill, took his seat under the banyan tree, and began to weep as he went on to say,

¹ This is one of the Sahi's or quarters of the city of Puri.

²⁻³ There was the shrubby growth under the banyan tree on the heights of the *Chatak-parvata*, the sand-dune mound. The banyan tree suggested the idea of the *Vamsibata*, the tree under which Sri Krishna would stand and play upon His flute. The *Chatak-parvata* itself was taken to be the mount Govardhana, and the shrubby growth, the bower of Vrindavan.

"Friends, I saw from the distance my life and soul Sri Gauranga in company with Svarupa Damodara, here under this banyan tree. I came up to them but I could not find them. This wood Sri Gauranga would take for Vrindavan, this banyan was to Him the *Vamsibata*, and this *Chatak-parvata* suggested Govardhana. He would feel He was in Vrindavan, would thrust His arms round the neck of His friend Svarupa, and weep and wail to have lost sight of Sri Krishna." Then, turning to his friends, he said, "Come, brother, let me hear the ambrosial ravings of Sri Gauranga at the sight of the *Chatak-parvata*." The devotee recited as follows:

*"How now? How here? Who brings me here?
I was with Krishna and all that is dear.
I went to Govardhana, and there I found
Krishna and His cattle on the fields around.
He climbed the hill and played on His pipe,
Radha came, leaving Her kinsfolk to jibe.
The graces of Her person I cannot describe,
They entered the cave, the honey-sucker's hive.
The maids came on, and waited without,
You raised a row and the vision died out.
Why do you vex me? You give me pain,
I strive to find Krishna, but Oh! in vain."
—Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita.*

He heard it with relish and was overjoyed. Thereupon he danced, as he led the way to the coast, and then, when he reached it, he looked upon the surging waves of the sea and muttered, "This sea was already the shrine of shrines. But now that it has come into contact with the dust of Sri Gauranga's feet, it has come to be the great shrine of shrines. It is mad with love—with the love of God. It is rolling and tossing on

the coast land. Do you know why? It is because the dust of Sri Gauranga's feet is there on the coast—it is for this reason that it sends its waves arolling to kiss the dust on the shore. Oh, if it will condescend to favour anyone, why, that one shall be blessed by Sri Gauranga without doubt." So saying, he threw himself down rolling and tossing on the shore. The sight of the sea roused his love divine, and he could not contain himself with joy. After a while he got up and they all bathed in the sea. Then they advanced towards the *samadhi*,¹ where lay Thakura Haridas—the great Mohammedan devotee, the special favourite of Lord Gauranga, Who buried him with His own hands and went abegging Himself for the celebration of his funeral ceremonies. All this streamed into his consciousness, and Barha Babaji was in a trance. The followers chanted aloud the Names of Hari and he was allright again. Then they returned, perambulated the Temple of Jagannath and came back to their lodging.

THE LILA

Here we must pause to consider a most important problem before we can hope to appreciate the beauty of the scene we have just described—I mean, the problem of the *lila* and its apprehension by the thorough-going devotees. The first thing we must note in this connection is that God—our Personal God—is not a mere historical personage, an ordinary mortal, that comes and goes and is heard no more, but the Eternal Being, Who manifests Himself at times to lend Himself to the easy understanding of the finite intelligence of

¹ Tomb. *Samadhi* means deep meditation, in which body-consciousness is transcended. The tomb of a saint, who has realized God is called *samadhi*, because he does not die, but is supposed to lie in the tomb in *samadhi*.

man. God is always and everywhere, and so are His *lilas*, His incomparable feats of love. They are not mere historical incidents, that are shrouded in darkness and cast into the shade by the glaring events of the succeeding years. They have no todays and yesterdays, bound down within the limits of time and space, but they are eternal and omnipresent as God Himself is Eternal and Omnipresent. The devotee sees his God within, he clings closely to His Lotus Feet—the fountainhead of the *lilas*, and he is carried away in the mighty current of the stream, till he is filled within and without—in his heart and on all sides around with God and His *lila*—real, resplendent, beautiful, blissful, eternal and profound, and his soul rests in peaceful contemplation of Eternal Bliss thus revealed to him on the super-conscious plane. He would fain be there as long as he is alive; he would seek to be there every moment of his life; and each little thing, insignificant to superficial men untrained in the art of spiritual visualization, would open up fresh vistas of spiritual perception and lead him straight to the Kingdom of his God. It was thus that the *Chatak-parvata* suggested the Eternal Govardhana of the Eternal Vrindavan and the Eternal Divine Love-play going on in the Eternal Cave. It was thus that the same suggested the Eternal Sri Gauranga with the Eternal Svarupa Damodara playing the eternal part of the ideal devotee, eternally intoxicated with the Eternal Love of the Eternal God, who appears only twice in a cycle of creation—as Sri Krishna in the Dvapara and Sri Gauranga in the Kali-Yuga—to reveal Himself in His Divine Fullness and show men the way to the Perfection of Beatitude and Bliss, the end and aim of life on earth. The two *lilas* are not two, but really one, essentially intertwined and synthetically combined in the one Indivisible Verity of Divine Being, and its truth, rather too fine or too big to be readily swallowed by reason on the plane of

consciousness, can surely be verified by actual experience on the super-conscious plane.

IMITATION CHAITANYA

One day they were passing through the *barha-danda*,¹ when Bhagavan Das Babaji, the *mahanta*² of the Narayana Chata,³ summoned them to partake of the *mahaprasada*, which was being freely distributed on the occasion of a festivity going on in that place. They readily acquiesced, for the *mahaprasada* was a Divine Thing, and a Vaishnava must never refuse to accept the offer of *mahaprasada*, which he should regard with the veneration due to the Lord. But they were so ill-clad and so humble in their ways and manners that they were naturally taken for street beggars, and asked to sit on the public road. They were supplied with a single leaf, which was to serve them as a plate to take the *prasada* from, while they were four, who were asked to sit for the *prasada*. And what was more, the blessed leaf was torn in the middle, and they were sitting on the dusty road. So, Navadwip Das, our old friend and dear brother of Barha Babaji Mahashaya, spread out his *bahirvasa*⁴ and put the torn leaf on it, so that the *prasada* might not come out and get mixed up with the dust of the road. Now the *mahanta* came, *prasada* in hand, saw what they had done, and exclaimed, "You rogues! You cannot give yourselves a dinner, and you turn Vaishnavas to cast a slur on Vaishnavism. What have you done?" Barha Babaji said smilingly, "Yes, sir, you are right. We are not Vaishnavas, and can

¹ The royal road of Puri.

² The keeper of a religious convent.

³ One of the great Maths or convents of Puri.

⁴ The *vairagis* or the recluse Vaishnavas wear the *kopin* and an outer cloth reaching down to the knees. The latter goes by the name of *bahirvasa*.

never hope to be Vaishnavas. Bless us, great one, and pray we may be allowed to be servants of Vaishnavas like your honored self. If your Lordship would give *prasada* to us all, give it here on my leaf and we shall take it all together." The *mahanta* was very angry, but he was softened to hear these sweet words and lavishly poured the *prasada* on the leaf. They took it with great delight and they were satisfied; for they had no hankering after any thing and were content with whatever they got under the circumstances. Another man would have protested against the unjust allegation made by the *mahanta*; but Barha Babaji did not; because he had not the vanity or the pride, which would have persuaded others to try to prove that they were much better than the ordinary hunger-stricken beggarly Vaishnavas, that mar the glory of the great religion they pretend to profess for the purpose of gaining their worldly ends. He was indeed the Barha Babaji—the great one—in all that he did, and his life and conduct must necessarily differ from that of the other men of the world.

Another day, they finished their ablution in the Narendra Sarovara,¹ and were going to the Temple of Jagannath singing and dancing on the way, when they met a *sannyasi* at the head of a procession party, walking with silver slippers under a silvered umbrella, who seemed to be a saint of note in the sacred city. They inquired about him and came to know that he was no other than Bhutnath Swami, in charge of the Jagannath Vallabha² at that time. They made obeisance to the saint, and the latter raised his hand and blessed them on the way. They had gone but a few paces, when the *sannyasi*

¹ This is the well-known bathing tank in the vicinity of the Temple of Jagannath.

² The word means, 'the favourite haunt of Lord Jagannath.' It is here that the Lord repairs to hold some of His entertainment services outside the Temple.

summoned them back to his presence, and this time when they came back and bowed again, the saint himself bowed saying *Namo Narayana*¹ in return and said, "*Mahatma*,¹ may I ask you where you are putting up?" "Father," said Barha Babaji, "we have no fixed place for our residence, but at present we are staying at the out-house of Ganesh Mahanti." "Well, well," said the *sannyasi*, "You are no ordinary man. I felt transcendental joy as I looked on you. I think you are intimate with Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the son of Jagannath Misra. In fact, from what I can gather from your looks and doings, I think you are an exact copy of Sri Chaitanya in your life and conduct. You are an 'Imitation Chaitanya' I would say. But, you see, you have renounced the world, you should not go and stay with a worldly man. Why not come and stay with me at my place? Do you come and occupy a room at the Jagannath Vallabha, and sing the Name of the Lord to your heart's content." "As you bid us, *mahatma*, so it shall be done" said Barha Babaji, and went away singing to the Temple of Jagannath. So, on the third day they came and put up at the Jagannath Vallabha, to the great joy of Bhutnath Swami, who was very favourably disposed towards them. 'A jewel alone knows what a jewel is like' says the Bengali proverb, and it is so true. It is the man of worth alone that can rightly discern true worth in the worthy that come about him. So, Swami Bhutnath looked into the heart of Barha Babaji, and knowing his greatness, desired near acquaintance and closer friendship with him at his own place at the Jagannath Vallabha; and they went on staying with him till the Lord was pleased to take them elsewhere.

¹ This is the form of salutation in vogue among the *sannyasis*, who are to behold God in all that meets their eyes.

² Or 'the great-souled'—a term of respect.

CHAPTER 9

TALKS ON SRI GAURANGA

A recluse came in, with matted hair on his head, and entered into lively conversation with Barha Babaji. "By your leave, Your Reverence", said the newcomer, "May I ask you to which sect you belong?"

"Sect? What sect, my brother, while God is one, and all belong to Him and Him alone!"

"Yes, sir, that is true. But then, there are so many different creeds in religion, and men follow the one or the other. This is what I mean."

SRI GAURANGA'S UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF LOVE

"Well, the different creeds are only so many different modes of grasping the same Eternal Truth. The differences cease to exist when the devotee comes face to face with the Truth. They represent the different schools of thought in our attempt to conceive the Divine Idea—lines of thought which can be and should be united and reconciled into a harmonious whole, which makes up the entire fabric of the Perfect Religion of all the world."

"But, there are these sects, and I would like to know the sect to which you belong."

"I take objection to the term 'sect,' which implies inclusion of some to the exclusion of others; for religion is in reality

an undivided whole, which admits of all these different conceptions at the different stages of spiritual evolution. But then, there is one thing. Some have climbed the initial steps, some up to the middle, while there have been some, who have gone up to the top of the ladder of evolution. Those who are at the top can see the different sets of religious aspirants clinging to the ladder at the various stages of spiritual development, and they can harmonize the apparent conflicts and contradictions and proclaim Truth from the pinnacle of God-realization. So, there are these gurus, at the different stages of God-realization, who have taught their disciples according to their power of comprehension, and they have started the lines of spiritual descendants, which, in after times, have come to be grouped as the different sects of religion on earth. There is no sect in the religion of God, who is One, there were no such sects and schisms in the teachings of the Great Masters—the *Loka-gurus*—they have come out of the imperfect understanding of the later disciples of the Great Masters.”

“Thank you very much. I am so glad that I have found one, who is above the limitations of narrow sectarianism. Now I can breathe freely, and I think I can take the liberty of inquiring about the Perfect Religion of all the world. No more of sects and schisms, but, let me know, if you please, the stand-point you would take to understand the Perfect Religion of the world.”

“My stand-point is that of Sri Chaitanya or Sri Gauranga, Who gave us His Religion of Love and Beauty, which is the Perfect Religion of all the world.”

“Then, you belong to the Gaudiya Vaishnava¹ Sampradaya, don’t you?”

¹ This is the name given to the followers of Sri Chaitanya, because His religion emanated from Gauda or Bengal.

"Yes, and no, at the same time. Yes, because I have accepted the principles of the Gaudiya Vaishnava, but no, because I do not think that the Gaudiya Vaishnavas should form a clique and mar the universal character of the religion of Sri Gauranga."¹

THE INCARNATION OF SRI GAURANGA

"But who is Sri Gauranga?"

"Sri Gauranga is the Incarnation of the Supreme, the High God, who incarnated Himself as Sri Krishna in the earlier age."

"Was He not born?"

"Of course He was. He was born as a Vaidik Brahmin in the city of Navadwip. Jagannath Misra was His father, and Shachi Devi His mother. That is to say, He accepted them as His parents, when He came down into the world."

"Excuse me, please. I am going to put some questions, which I hope you will kindly answer."

"Go on, I do not mind. We are followers of Nityananda, we cannot take offense."

"Is it possible that God should be born like the natural sons of men and women?"

"God, you must remember, is omnipotent. He can, and He actually does, incarnate Himself for the good of the world. He works for the destruction of evil and the construction of the Edifice of Righteousness in the world. Thus, He has come down, from time to time, for His Divine Purposes, as Sri Ramachandra, Sri Krishna and Sri Gauranga for the regeneration of the world."

¹ Ref.—Vide *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita—Sadhya-sadhana-tattva*, embodied in the conversation between Sri Chaitanya and Ramananda Roy.

PROOFS FOR THE DIVINITY OF SRI GAURANGA

"But how can you prove that Sri Gauranga is the Lord Himself?"

"No proof like ocular proof, they say. They saw Him and knew Him to be the Lord Himself—those who had the eyes—'the spirit's eyes'—to see Him aright. Nityananda saw Him and knew Him, and so did the other devotees, who were spiritually advanced in those days. They do see Him and know Him to be the Lord even now—they who can discern the High Spirit with the spirit's eyes. But, what is ocular proof to one that is blind? How can you prove it to the blind that the sun is up? Yes, to those who have eyes, when the sun rises, there needs no ghost to come and tell them that the sun is up. So it is with the Lord. They can see, who have developed their spirituality and rendered themselves fit for God-vision. But the blind cannot see, no amount of reasoning will convince the blind man of the existence and effulgence of the sun. He must wait till a doctor comes and restores his eye-sight, and then he can see the sun like those that talked to him about the sun, when he could not see. That's it, come, will it do?"

"Venerable Sire, you may be right when you say so from your own point of view. But one may think that you are just evading the question. The blind must be convinced of the possibility, if not of the actual existence, of the sun, before he can be persuaded to go to a doctor and open his eye-sight for a first-hand knowledge of the sun."

"Yes, but that is second-hand knowledge, you see and you must remember that this can only persuade you to undertake the task, but it will never carry conviction before you have actually realized the truth for yourself. However, I will try.

"The *shastras* all declare that God comes down as Sri Gauranga in the Kali-Yuga. These *shastras* are handed down to us from time immemorial, and they contain the revealed utterances of the *Rishis*, the seers of Truth. These *Rishis* are past masters of spiritual wisdom, and their unerring vision is unimpeded by the limitations of space and time. They saw it beforehand and recorded their pre-vision long before Sri Gauranga actually came down into the world. I will not trouble you with the numerous quotations in support of the incarnation of Sri Gauranga, but simply refer you to the scriptures; where they are to be found, so that you can verify it to your satisfaction if you are inclined to do so. Thus, you find it in the Vedas—the '*Chandogya*,' and more clearly in the '*Chaitanya-Upanishad*'—in the *Samhitas*, the *Ordhamnaya* and more fully in the *Ananta-Samhitas*, the *Puranas*—the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the *Vayu-Purana*, the *Saura-Purana*, the *Brahma-Purana*, the *Padma-Purana*, the *Garuda-Purana*, the *Shiva-Purana*, the *Nrisinha-Purana*—and also in the *Tantras*—the *Bishvasara*, the *Kapila*, the *Kularnava*, the *Sadhanollas*, the *Krishnayamala*, the *Brahmayamala*, and all the rest. I think I have already given you a fairly long list just to let you see that those who were in the know knew it already even before the manifestation of Sri Gauranga as the Lord in our midst. And let me tell you that the testimony of these *shastras* is stronger than the testimony of the senses; for the latter is liable to change and open to errors; while the former is indubitably true and its predictions are sure to be fulfilled. The *Rishis* of old did not infer, but directly perceived the truths, and they are infallible. They predicted that God would come down as Sri Gauranga, and their descriptions were fulfilled in the manifestation that came after. Besides, men like Prakashananda Sarasvati—the then spiritual guide of the *sannyasis* of Benares, the seat of spiritual wisdom, and

Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, the gigantic leader and Court Pandit of Puri, the other center of Vedantic lore—colossal spiritualists and the greatest savants of the day—came to worship Sri Gauranga as the Great Lord, and recorded their experience in their writings. These facts put together go to show that Sri Gauranga is the Lord Himself, and you may safely take it on trust and set to work, and verify the truth for yourself by actual realization. What a charming personality is Sri Gauranga! how beautiful! how dignified! how sweet! how graceful! how towering! how captivating! Oh, when and where shall we find His like again! He is alone; and Sri Gauranga is our Lord, the Lord of all the worlds. May He bless you and send you a ray of His Spiritual Light!”

“And so you bless me before I ask you for it! I am so much in need of it. I am a wretched wanderer in quest of Truth, and I have met with disappointment wherever I turned. But I have found it at last. You have filled me with hopes of spiritual blessedness. So, let me call you my spiritual leader, and let me, venerable sire—let me sit at thy feet and take lessons in the Perfect Religion of the World. Give me your grace, Sir, will you?” With this, he fell at the feet of the Barha Babaji and Barha Babaji clasped him to his heart, and said softly, “Welcome, brother, peace to you. We are fortunate that we are born in the Kali-Yuga, when Sri Gauranga comes down to save us all. Set your heart at rest, I say, Nityananda is so merciful. You have only to come to Him, and when you come, you are saved. Your sins and stains shall be washed away. You shall have Peace and Blessedness and Love Divine, the one cherished goal of human existence on earth.”

The recluse was overpowered with emotion, when this divine mercy was showered on him. He tried to speak but could not. He burst in tears. He wept for joy. He sighed to

think of the past, spent idly away. He winced and wailed for what he had done. He knew not how to thank God for the mercy, He had shown him. Night wore but he could not sleep, anxiously waiting for the morning on which he was to turn over a new leaf of existence. Morning came; he started out of his bed, shaved his head, and took his bath. He consigned himself to Barha Babaji, who initiated him and put him on the way to spiritual blessedness. This *sadhu* was Krishnananda Das, the same who accompanied Baba Premananda Bharati, on his way to America for fulfilling his evangelical mission in far-off lands.

Now, there were the 'Historic Foot-prints' of Sri Chaitanya on a slab of marble near *Garuda-stambha*¹ inside the Temple of Jagannath—foot-prints marked on stone, converted into the consistency of clay by the magical tears that streamed down the cheeks and chest of Sri Gauranga entranced at the sight of Lord Jagannath. These sacred relics used to be trampled down by inadvertent strangers that came in crowds on the special occasions to have a look at Sri Jagannath. These foot-prints were removed, under orders of the Raja and in the presence of his officers, to a spot in the adjoining yard within the temple. Barha Babaji Mahashaya had them tabernacled and duly installed on a lotus of white marble.

At this time a boy, whose name was Shital Das, came and joined the party of Barha Babaji. He was entrusted with the *seva*, or the service, of these foot-prints. Gauracharan Chakravarti was also at this time initiated by Barha Babaji into the life of renunciation—the taking of '*bhek*' as it is called—and came to be known as Govinda Das. Thus they came, one by one, and filled the ranks, as Barha Babaji set

¹ It is customary to have a pillar surmounted by the form of Garuda, the king

out on his excursions against the impurity and sin of the Kali-Yuga.

of birds, supposed to be the carrier of the Lord, in front of the Image of Vishnu. There is such a pillar at the other end of the Jagamohana in front of Lord Jagannath. It was from here that Sri Chaitanya would look at the Lord every day when He was staying as a *sannyasi* at Nilachala.

CHAPTER 10

THE CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH LORD JAGANNATH

THE BATH CEREMONY

The Bath Ceremony came on, and thousands of visitors hailed from different quarters of the country to witness the grand performance. They were standing—here, there, and everywhere; they filled the Barha Danda, the royal road before the temple; they filled every inch of the Great Bath Stand; the doors, windows, verandahs, and flat roofs of the houses standing on the road—and looked, with full hearts and folded hands, on the Four Divine Images seated at ease on the *Snana-vedi*.¹ Numerous flags were streaming in the air, canopies of variegated colors hanging aloft and pompous shows and gorgeous displays every where. What a fine sight! What heavenly beauty! Musical instruments of every description—the conch, the *kahali*, the *gharhi*, the *kansar*, the *mridanga*, the *mandir*, and all the rest—all sounded together to produce a sacred symphony, which lifted the bystanders above the affairs of the world and set them on the land of Elysian Bliss. Men cried ‘Jai! Jai!’ women shouted

¹ The *Snana-vedi* is the spacious seat on the high floor overlooking the royal road, where the Lord was seated to take His bath during the Snana-Yatra festival.

'Ulu! Ulu!', and ten thousand voices 'Hari! Hari!'—in a solemn note of universal hallelujah to the Great Lord presented to their view.

At this stage came Barha Babaji and started his melody of ecstatic inspiration.

He lisped in numbers as the numbers came—they poured in torrents and drowned all that were present in the scene. They were all in a transport of joy, perfectly oblivious of themselves and their surroundings—above the limitations of space and time that hold us bound to the realities of the world. And he—our Barha Babaji—he was transplanted as it were, and transmuted into another being—in *tete-a-tete* with his Lord. He looked at the face of the Lord and shed copious tears of joy. He was sobbing and pouring out the contents of his heart in the hearing of his love. Now he was angry and then he was supplicating, and next moment he was pining away in love for his Lord. And so he went on, exposing the nectared sweets of the charming sentiment of Love Divine. The visitors looked, now at Jagannath and then at Barha Babaji—for they could not choose between the two—they knew not where to fix their eyes.

The day wore on, and the *sankirtan* closed for the day. Then came the *mahaprasada*, and they all sat on the *snana-vedi* to partake of it. O what joy! He knows who has ever joined such a party at such an hour! They were all like little children, for differences ceased to exist and they felt they were all members of the same universal fraternity of all the world. Somebody took a morsel to his neighbour's lips, while another snatched a bit of the bitten morsel from his friend's mouth and took it himself; father and son was as one and so was the heterogeneous mass, of different races and castes and creeds of the different parts of the world assembled on the spot on the sacred occasion.

JAGANNATH APPEARS AS GANESH

Then Sri Jagannath was dressed up as Ganesh. "I would like to know," said our friend. Krishnananda "why Lord Jagannath appears as Ganesh¹ today."

"Listen," said Barha Babaji, "it has an interesting history which would show that Lord Jagannath is really the wish-tree of the devotees.

"There was one Ganapaty Bhatta in Karnat, who studied the *shastras* and thought that God being the formless *Brahman* was beyond the ken of the senses. He ransacked the scriptures to find out whether God could possibly be in person, for then he might go and see Him and attain *mukti*. He found in the *Brahma Purana* that God is to be found in the visible form as *Daru-Brahma* (*Brahman* in wood) in Nilachal. His joy knew no bounds. He gave up his all and ran to Nilachal. He was resting one day on the way when he met people returning after having seen the Lord of Nilachal. He was in doubt. He repented of what he had done. For, surely, there was not *Brahman* to be found in Nilachal, he argued, for then people could not have returned to the world. At this time, God appeared to him in the guise of an old Brahmin. Knowing the cause of his distress, He assured him that the Lord fulfilled the desires of the onlookers, and that He would never send him away without granting him the salvation on which he had set his heart. Our Bhatta was cheered up to hear all this, and made for Nilachal. He saw Lord Jagannath, but felt sorry, for he could not see him as Ganapati, the form in which he would like to see his God. He was going away when the Lord Himself

¹ 'Ganesh' is the name of the god, with the face of the elephant and four hands worshipped as the giver of successes in life.

spoke to one of the *pandas* (the officers in His service) and summoned him back to have a look at Him as he would. He came, and lo! It was Gajanan (Ganesh or Ganapati) that this time met his eyes. He fell prostrate and sang praises to his Lord. The Lord would grant him a boon, and he asked that He might in His infinite grace appear as Gajanan every year after the Snana-Yatra. The boon was granted, and the Lord does appear as Ganesh at this time of the year. The Brahmin set his eyes on the Lord and was soon lost in *samadhi*. A ray of light shot out of the Brahmin and disappeared in the Person of the Lord. This is the history of the Ganesh *vesh* of the Lord."

THE PERIOD OF THE LORD'S REST

It is the time-honored custom in the Temple of Jagannath that the Lord would take rest for a fortnight after the Snana-Yatra, during which time the doors are to be closed and men shut out from their gaze at the Lord. Now, it is too much for the devotees to be in the Land of the Lord and go without having a look at the face of their Lord, their Love. So, they make it a point to stay away from Nilachal till such time as the Lord would favour them again. Sri Chaitanya, when He was staying at Puri, would go to Alalnath to spend these days there. Our Barha Babaji, who always walked in the wake of Lord Gauranga, went to Alalnath, and thousands of devotees followed in his train, with *khols* and *karatal*s singing all the way.

So they marched on, till at last they reached the Temple of Alalnath. The deafening peals of the *sankirtan* party drew the villagers to the spot. They all danced and sang with vehemence for some time and then they sat down to rest. A gentleman volunteered to make special arrangements for

the Lord's *bhoga*.¹ The chief feature of the *bhoga* at this place was hot *payasanna*,² and it ranks as a rarity in point of exquisite preparation. They partook of it after it was offered up to the Lord.

The villagers came every day and took them eagerly to their respective villages to participate in the celestial bliss, which these celestial beings always carried with them wherever they went. Days went on, and one day a devotee reminded Babaji Mahashaya that it was the fourteenth day of the new moon and it was high time they should return to Nilachal. Babaji Mahashaya spoke softly to the villagers and persuaded them to let them go, saying that they might come again some other time; and singing as usual, came back to Puri and stayed at the Jagannath-Vallabha.

THE LORD'S REJUVENESCENCE

It was on the New Moon day that the Lord reappeared in juvenile freshness, and the devotees ran to meet Him with a hungering heart and longing eyes. The temple was crowded. Babaji Mahashaya made his way through the crowd, dancing and singing:

"O Thou Jagannath, Nilachal's Solace,
Give us Thy Grace, Thy Look of Grace,"

and bowed prostrate before the Lord. All the rest followed him, and then, when the door opened, he was in ecstasies over the long-wished-for look of the Lord, and began to sing again:

"I've pined so long, and now Thou art here.
Blessed am I to find Thee, Dear!

¹ 'Bhoga' is the offering of food to the deity.

² This is a dainty preparation made of scalded milk and scented rice and sugar.

Oh! how I've suffer'd—long, so long,
 The seconds were years, the hours age-long,
 Life insupportable, without Thee, Lord,
 Weak, but a woman, silly girl cowerd.
 Wise, clever, art Thou, O Player on the Flute!
 Gallant, in love's philosophy astute;
 Thy killing ogles have tak'n mine all
 My caste, My lineage, my havings and all
 And now, out of sight, oh, out of Thy mind!
 Why so, dear? How now so unkind!"

So he went on for some time like the gopis¹ of Vrindavan, accusing their lover, Krishna, of His unkindness, and delineating the pangs they have suffered in His absence. And then he began in another key, as the pathetic sentiment gave place to rejoicing at the long expected meeting after long separation:

*"Long the light of Thy face on me hasn't shone,
 But now that woeful time is fairly gone.
 Happy to look on Thy sweet face again,
 All sorrows dispell'd reliev'd all pain.
 Look ye, my comrades, on the Moon-like Face,
 Look till you are lost in the loving grace."*

He sang with proper modulations and fitting gestures, and made the gopis of Vrindavan start afresh from the land of oblivion and the hearts of devotees to appear in person and dance before the eyes of the visitors in the temple.² They were

¹ The love-intoxicated damsels of Vrindavan.

² A word of explanation is necessary before we can fully appreciate the possibility of 'true joy divine' felt as we hear these delicious songs. The *lila* or the love-dalliance of the Lord is eternal, in more senses than one. In the first place, this Eternal *Lila* is going on eternally in Goloka, the Land of Eternity.

(please turn to next page)

all charmed—drowned in the deep of the bliss of Vrindavan and returned home with new life and spirit pulsating in their frames, when towards evening Babaji Mahashaya returned with his party to rest for the day.

THE CLEANSING OF THE GARDEN-HOUSE OF THE LORD

Lord Krishna comes back to Vrindavan on the morrow. Sri Radha was all but dead all this time during the long spell of separation. Now She is astir, eager to see Her Lover again, eager to serve Him with all Her heart. She bids Her handmaidens to be all attention. She exhorts them to make everything ready for His reception. The bower of dalliance must be cleansed, flowers plucked, garlands made, the bed of roses, the sandal paste and all other accessories made ready for the great occasion.

This is the underlying idea of the cleansing ceremony. It was introduced by Sri Chaitanya, when He was at Nilachal, playing the part of Radha (which means Devotion incarnated) in the guise of a *sannyasi*.¹ It was continued for some

¹ In fact, Sri Chaitanya is a Double Divine Personality manifested on earth. He was as the Lord Himself during the greater part of His career in Navadwip; and then in His *bhava* He lived as Radha, the Lady Divine, the Lady of Devotion, during His stay at Nilachala.

(from previous page) Secondly, this Eternal *Lila* is manifested on earth when Sri Krishna incarnates Himself in the Dvapara-Yuga of the twenty-eighth cycle of the seventh (the Vaivaswata) Manvantara of the Day of Brahma, and as Sri Gauranga in the Kali-Yuga of the same cycle. This is Eternal in the sense that this manifestation is enacted at all times in one or other Brahmandas (universes) in existence. Thirdly, this *lila* can be felt in the heart by anybody at any time and in any place, if only he has developed the spiritual senses to perceive the spiritual truths. Babaji Mahashaya felt it, and made others feel the same by singing and dancing out of the fullness of his heart.

time even after the disappearance of the Lord, but then it came to be discontinued for some reason or another. Babaji Mahashaya worked upon the *mahantas* of the leading Mathas, and made them rally round the banner of Sri Chaitanya in their united effort to renew the *lila*¹ on the eve of the Great Ratha-Yatra Ceremony.

The day dawned, and Babaji Mahashaya plunged with his party in the Narendra-sarovar, perambulated the Temple of Lord Jagannath, then entered and offered the morning service, partook of the Vallabha-*bhoga prasada*, and went straight into the Lala Babu's, at the Southern Gate of the Lord's temple. Thence they proceeded to Gambhira, the residence of Lord Gauranga, and saw that the leading party set out on the sacred mission of the day. They came back to Sri Jagannath Vallabha and found everything ready—all were eagerly waiting for them with *khol*s and *karatal*s, and brooms and pitchers necessary for the day's work in the service of the Lord. They were hailed with cries of 'Haribol!' as they came, and venerable Raghunath Das and Harideva Goswamis made their appearance on the scene.

They marched on and entered the Gundicha Mandir, the Garden-house of the Lord. The venerable Goswamis began to sweep the *Ratna-Vedi*, the Jewelled Seat of the Lord, while others swept away all the dirt and the dust in every creek and corner of the temple. They swept the floor, they swept the walls. But the ceiling was high up overhead. One stood on the shoulders of another, and so shouldering on, they reached the top and swept the ceiling too. Then came

¹ The ordinary reader may run away with the idea that all this is but a play of the imagination without any substance of truth in it. But no, it is not imaginary, but very true, as it is felt as true as lifelike, as substantial as experience can be, and we have already discussed in a previous footnote how these *lilas* are true and eternal in three different senses.

the washing. Barha Babaji Mahashaya cried 'Water!' and they ran to draw water from the wells. Some in their eagerness fetched water from the Indradyumna-sarovara, and came, pitcher in hand, pitcher on the head, as fast as legs could carry to the spot. They were all in a bustle, working heart and soul merrily together, crying, handing over, filling and carrying, pouring and washing, singing and dancing in heavenly glee in all parts of the temple, the yard, the garden and the royal road.

Then followed an incident which altogether transformed, etherealised, spiritualised the whole scene. Venerable Raghunath passed into a trance, jumped down¹ from the *Ratna Vedi*² and began to dance. He had a vision and said that Nitai and Gaura were there, dancing and cleansing the temple along with them. Babaji Mahashaya caught up the trance and sang:

*"Lo, there my Nitai-Gaura dance in glee,
Sri Advaita, Gadadhara, and all the company."*

And what was the result! Babaji Mahashaya was rapt in the spiritual vision of the Lord, and he transmitted this spiritual force into the hearts of all those present on the scene. He was the dynamo, so to speak, and he electrified—spiritualised those that came under his influence. The venerable Goswami was already entranced, and he swooned away under the mighty influx of spiritual energy. All were absent, abstracted, in-

¹ Here it should be noted that there is trance and trance. It is not always that a man in a trance is absolutely motionless. Stirlessness is only one of the external signs of entrancement. There are seven more signs—the *Sattvikavikaras*, as they are called—which indicate the ecstatic condition, and these are—tears, horripilation, trembling, broken voice, change of color, perspiration, and swooning away.

² "*Ratna Vedi*" means 'The Elevated Seat of Gems'—The seat of the Images of the Lords.

drawn, and lost to the world of senses. Deferential differences were no more; a sense of pervading unity drowned them all. They knew not where they were, they hardly knew what they did. Some emptied the pitchers on the heads of others, some stood still rooted to the spot, some danced with arms upraised, some laughed in a loud uproar, some skipped, some tripped, some fell on the ground and shed tears of joy.

But what does all this mean? Is it hypnotism? No, it's just the reverse. It is de-hypnotism. We are all hypnotized, deluded into the belief that our self is inseparably associated with our flesh and blood, that we are wholly concerned with our experiences in the external world, that the attainment of sensuous pleasures is the one end and aim of human existence, that we live only so long as we are in touch with the world of senses and that we die when we shuffle off this mortal coil which binds us down to the world. But this is not the whole truth; they know who know, who have finer experiences of finer truths. There is the subtle body—the *linga-sarira*, which persists after the dissolution of the flesh. And then there is the spirit-body—the *bhava-deha*, which is eternal—and which enables us to take part in the Eternal *Lilas* of our Eternal Lord. It is in us all—each and every one of the erring sons of men, for we are all the eternal servants of our Eternal Lord, and it is for us to throw off the veil, and discover our true selves in the eternal service of the Lord. The gracious appearance of the Lord and His own men helps us in the matter and reveals the truth, and then we can see things as they are—we can see God, we can see our true selves, we can see the relation in which we stand to our Lord, we get the passport to the Eternal Lord of Eternal *Lilas* and Eternal Bliss. This is what happened in the twinkling of an eye in the company of our Barha Babaji Mahashaya in the Gundicha Mandir of the Lord Jagannath.

Words fail to describe the true feeling of the fortunate souls, who came to take part in the proceedings of the cleansing ceremony. It is enough to say that they felt they were actually in the company of Sri Chaitanya and His blessed band of devotees who inaugurated the same ceremony more than five hundred years before. Any one who is really eager to feel what they felt may go and participate in the ceremony, which is perpetuated by his followers to the present day, and then he will have a better idea of the blissful scene than what a feeble pen can give in the dull pages of a book.

THE CAR FESTIVAL OF JAGANNATH

It was morning. All were astir in the Temple of the Lord. They tied the Images with costly bands and ligaments of diverse colors and started the *Pahandi-Vijay*.¹ Barha Babaji Mahashaya came and stood watching the progressive movement of the Lord, as He passed on from one round pad to another, till his heart was full and he sang:

"Swinging and swaying comes He,
 Gauranga the Golden dances in glee,
 Svarupa Ramananda on either side,
 Gauranga is Radha in love's full-tide."

The Lord Himself was delighted² and seemed to smile.

¹ The expression literally means in Urhiya 'walking on legs.' The Images are apparently seated successively on the large round pads of cotton arranged in a row for the occasion, but the devotee sees that the Lord actually walks at ease over the bales and makes His way towards the car.

² We have already said that the Lord can be seen only with the Spiritual Eye. Those who are blessed with this vision can see the Lord in the Image, and he can actually discern the dimpling smiles on the face of the Lord.

The pads of cotton gave way under Him, and it seemed the heart of Barha Babaji Mahashaya burst out like the natural spring into rills and streams of joy that thrilled the audience and inundated their soul. They joined in the cries of 'Haribol!' which followed, and in the midst of these raptures the Lord ascended the car. The *kalabethias*¹ set their hands to the ropes, the visitors cried 'Haribol!' at the pitch of their voice, the conches began to blow, the auspicious note of 'Ulu!' was heard, the sound of the *jhanakar jhai kansar*² deafened the ears, and the *mridangas*,³ the *madals*,⁴ and the *jhanjs*⁵ of the *kirtanias* were rending the skies when the voice of Babaji Mahashaya rose in the air. He had been looking steadfastly on the face of the Lord, and now he began to sing as the car moved on.⁶

He sang, and he danced, and he danced on, and after some time began to sing the 'Divine Madness Song'⁷ of Sri Chaitanya on seeing Lord Jagannath.

¹ These are tenanted labourers for dragging the car.

²⁻³⁻⁴⁻⁵ These are the different kinds of musical instruments being sounded.

⁶ There runs an undercurrent of Divine Sentiment behind the ceremonial operations of the Great Car Festival of Lord Jagannath. It is not an idle show, a pompous pageant, a grandiose display of barbaric wealth, full of sights and sounds signifying nothing but a *lila*, a Revelation, an actual scene from the great drama of divine manifestation for the beatification of the men of the world. But who can know Him and discern His *lila*, unless God is pleased to give us His grace? So God Himself came down as Sri Gauranga and opened our eyes to the *lila* underlying the festival. The *lila* is as follows: Sri Krishna appears before the *gopis* on Kurukshetra. The *gopis* entreat Him to come back to Vrindavan. He comes back riding on the car. The *gopis* make their preparations for His reception. They pluck the flowers, they weave the garlands, they make beds of flowers, they decorate the bower, they advance to meet Him, they greet Him with singing and dancing and lead Him back to Vrindavan. Sri Jagannath is no other than Sri Krishna and the Gundicha Mandir, the bower of dalliance—Vrindavan.

⁷ This 'Divine Madness Song' of Sri Chaitanya is to be found in the *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*, the wonderfully learned biography of Sri Chaitanya by Sri Krishnadas Kaviraja of Vrindavan.

He went on in the same strain as did Sri Chaitanya on the same spot on the same occasion. Tears came streaming down his chest, as he was with proper gestures and tell-tale look speaking to his Lord in his heart of hearts. He was dancing—one foot on another in his own charming way—dancing, it seemed, in the vicinity of Lord Gauranga as one of His own men in the *nitya-lila*¹—enchanting, enthralling those that came in his way, to the delight of Lord Jagannath Who slackened the speed² of the car to hear him sing and see him dance. The car stopped, and *bhoga* was offered up to the Lord. Barha Babaji Mahashaya stood stock-still, and seemed to be looking out anxiously for some Dear One³ he had lost. It was only for a moment and the next moment he was altogether changed. The cheeks were flushed, and tears began to pour. He tried to speak; but his voice was choked, he could not speak. He groaned in agony and fainted away as he fell down on the ground. All the eight *sattvika-vikaras*⁴ took possession of him at one and the same time. His copious tears wetted the road and made it muddy. The mighty frame trembling all over made them tremble, who came in contact with him. The hairs stood on end, and his whole body was like the ripe *kantaki*⁵ fruit, bristling with

¹ The eternal truth of the *lila* in its three fold-aspect has been already explained in a foregoing chapter.

² It has been noticed by the devotees that Lord Jagannath actually quickens, slackens and sometimes stops the motion of the car at His own sweet will, inspite of the futile attempts of the men entrusted with the movement of the car.

³ This shows that the whole thing is not the creation of a poet's imagination but the close pursuit of the Truth of Truths. The devotee seeks to see God. God appears as Sri Gauranga dancing and singing His own *lila* in Vrindavan. He appears, and there is joy. Then He disappears, and there is agony and distress.

⁴ The *Sattvika-vikaras* we have already explained before.

⁵ *Kantaki*—i. e. the Jack-fruit.

eruptions, so to speak. Now he grew large, and then he grew thin, sometimes he clenched his fists and then he slackened, he groaned, he foamed, he rubbed his face on the ground in a violent paroxysm of the pining passion (*Viraha*);¹ till at last he came to be half conscious in the *ardha-bahya*² state, when he took his friend Navadwip Das by the neck and sang in a subdued tone:

*"To whom shall I confide the sore distress,
The heart-rending pangs not to see Gauranga's face!*

*Where is Svarupa,³ Rama Roy,⁴ Nityananda.⁵
Where is Srivas,⁶ Gadadhara,⁷ Advaitachand?⁸
Sri Rupa,⁹ Sri Sanatana,¹⁰ Murari,¹¹ Mukunda?¹²
Oh, where is Haridas?¹³ Where Shivananda?¹⁴*

*Just now Gauranga with His troop of devotees
Danced before the car in Divine Ecstasies.
The same Jagannath, the same stately car,
Where hides my Gauranga? Where, Oh where?*

*I'd ascend the pyre, poison I'd take,
Drown myself in the deep, to the waters betake.
I saw Him dancing, brimming o'er with love,*

¹ Milan means 'union with the Lord,' and *Viraha* means 'separation,' or rather the pangs of separation when the Lord is not near by.

² There are these three states of an accomplished devotee: The *Bahya dasha*, or 'the outgoing state,' when impressions may be received from the external world; the *Aradha-bahya dasha* or 'the half conscious state,' when things are but half received and half rejected; and the *Antar dasha*, or 'the in-drawn state,' when nothing is received from without, and the soul is lost in ecstatic bliss profound.

³⁻¹⁴ These are the names of the principal devotees, the *nitya-parshadas*, the constant companions of Lord Gauranga.

And then I lost Him, my Treasure, my Love.
Why live bereft? What joy? What life?
Oh the flinty heart, w'dn't break in the strife!"

He wept, and wept bitterly, when Navadwip Das sang out:

"Lo, there's Gauranga, with His party there,
Let's go and see Him (dancing) behind the car."

At this Barha Babaji Mahashaya clasped him to his chest and said tearfully:

"What can I give you, brother, in return?
You buy me straight, you give me Gauranga."

So saying, he started up and ran behind the car. There he stopped, he saw what he saw.¹ He uplifted his hand, he danced up and down, he wheeled round the car, and the car started again. Then he began to sing as before.

He sang on and on—it had no ending. The visitors looked at Sri Jagannath and then at the love-beaming face of Babaji Mahashaya. They clapped their hands and sang and danced in a transport of joy.

The car went on till it was evening and the men were tired. Sri Jagannath stopped near the Balgandi, to rest for the day. Most of the devotees went away to their respective lodgings. But Barha Babaji Mahashaya would not go. He would stop on the way while the Lord was on the way, and partake of the *mahaprasada* tasted by the Lord. Four days

¹ This re-appearance of the Lord after His disappearance is a further proof that our Lord is not an imaginary Lord, but the real Lord Who comes and goes at His own sweet will, and in His infinite mercy reveals Himself to our longing eyes.

passed in this way, and it was on the fifth day that the Lord reached the Gundicha Mandir, the destination of His journey on the car.

AT THE GUNDICHA MANDIR

So the Lord is come back to Vrindavan after a long spell of absence. The livelong night of suffering is gone, and there shines the Lord in all the splendour and glory of Divine Sweetness and Light, gladdening the hearts of His dear ones in the bower of dalliance. Sweet Krishna is come at last, and their joy knows no bounds to have a look at His dear, dear face. They look and look—again and again, from here, from there, on the right and on the left, they drink deep—deeper and deeper still—of the ambrosial potion in that Face Divine, to satiate their unquenchable thirst for the look of the Lord. Then they open their hearts and begin to pour the pept-up contents of an age of separation. Suddenly they stop—and, woe is me! How is He changed!—It is not the same loving sweet-heart as of old! So stiff, so unrequiting, so indifferent! What is the matter with Him? Has He forsaken us and given away His heart to another damsel? Is it so? Is it possible?

Our Babaji Mahashaya was possessed with this sentiment as he was looking with unwinking eyes at the face of Lord Jagannath. He was looking and shedding tears as he sang:

*"On either side, Svarupa Ramananda,
Transported, Gaura talks to the Lord:
'I simply die, not to see Thee.
You do not deign to look at me.*

*'Unlettered I, but a shepherd girl,
Accomplished Thou of ambrosial curl.*

*'Seduced' st me with Thy beauty and charm,
Madest me leave my hearth and home,
And now treatest me like a stranger, Dear,
Oh, Let me die, my murderer! here.'*"

The pangs of lost love came upon him, and Babaji Mahashaya fell, like the mighty tree uprooted by the storm. They tried to pacify him, but in vain. He wept, he wailed, he cried, and made them cry who gathered round him. He sobbed aloud and rolled from one end of the Jagamohana to the other. The joints gave way, and the flexible limbs were turned and twisted in diverse ways, till breathing itself was stopped and he lapsed into a state of insensibility in the intensity of his Divine suffering.

They knew not what to do and how to bring him back to his senses, when suddenly there came a *sannyasi* in yellow robes, and assured them that Babaji Mahashaya was a saint of a very high order and that the state he was in was hardly to be approached by ordinary mortals, and that he could be summoned back to consciousness again if somebody would undertake to sing him a song purporting to be a response from the lips of Krishna to soothe the sufferings of His love-lorn Radha. Then sang Navadwip Das after a moment's reflection with closed eyes contemplating:

*"Why charge me, dear? 'tis not meet.
Thou my idol, my all, my Radha sweet.
Ladies there are many here in Vrindavan,
By day and night, I think and dream, of thee
and thee alone.
Arise, my dear—forgive, forbear, I charge
thee with thy love,
I grieve to find thee repine—it breaks my
heart, I tell thee, Love!"*

The song was sung, and lo! Babaji Mahashaya started up in great joy and showed signs of recovery. Tears, tremor and horripilation appeared, and the song was repeated again and again till he completely regained his senses and sat erect, to the great joy of the by-standers.

The fact is, that he was hungering for the love of Krishna on the super-conscious plane of the *lilas*, and this love was returned; and then and then alone could he come back to himself, and feel as merry as a lark on its wings in the heavens above.

From what has been said above it must not be concluded that Babaji Mahashaya was imitating Radha or Sri Gauranga in the mood (*bhava*) of Sri Radha. Babaji Mahashaya had the conceit of a *gopi* or rather a *manjari*, whose experience is identical with that of Radha. *Manjari* is a *gopi*, who is exclusively devoted to Radha and who loves Krishna only because Radha is devoted to Him. Her devotion to Radha is so intense and so pure that unlike the other *gopis*, she does not dally with Krishna even if He so desires (*Ujjvala-nilamani*, Sakhi 88; *Vrindavan-mahimamritam*, 16-94). This does not, however, indicate that her realization is inferior to that of the other *gopis*. On the other hand, her realization is identical with that of Radha Herself. On account of the intensity of her exclusive devotion to Radha, any change in Radha's *bhava* or experience, is automatically reflected in her.¹ Besides, she has access to the secretmost *lilas* of Radha-Krishna, which are beyond the reach of Lalita, Vishakha and other *gopis* who are the foremost *sakhis*, or eternal companions of Radha (*Vrajavilasa-stava*, 38). Srila Krishnadas Kaviraja Goswami

¹ A notable example of this we find in the first *sloka* of Raghunath Dasa Goswami's *Vilapakusumanjali*, in which he humorously refers to a *lila* in which Krishna kisses Radha, but the mark of the kiss appears on the face of Rupa Manjari (Sri Rupa Goswami).

says that if Krishna touches Radha, *sattvika-bhavas* appear on the bodies of the *manjaris*. *Manjari-bhava-upasana* was not known before Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. It is His special gift to the Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

Now, what are those ceremonies of Lord Jagannath? Are they mere idle shows to tempt the curiosity of the thronging visitors on the scene? Are they mere theatrical performances meant for the amusement and diversion of the busy men of the world? Do they resemble the May-poles and May queens and such other observances of other lands? No—an emphatic 'No' is the answer. The thing is that the Indian mind is essentially spiritual. It is bound in wed-lock, as it were, to the Spirit; it has a natural attraction for spiritual things; it cannot rest without spirit-food being supplied to it in all possible ways. It adores the Spirit within and without—in the heart of hearts and also in the world of senses. It catches hold of the Spirit, so it speak, and with the help of devotional concentration, it invokes the Spirit and manifests it in the outward things. It does so, because it must; it must have Spirit-food always and under all circumstances—with closed eyes in the transcendental state, and then with open eyes too in the spiritualised things of the external world. This is the true significance of these sacred ceremonies, and herein lies the secret of the huge gatherings of men on these occasions.

THE GENESIS OF THE FORM OF LORD JAGANNATH

One day Babaji Mahashaya was at Jagannath Temple. The *dhup*¹ was over. A devotee came forward and offered to treat Babaji Mahashaya and his party with the *mahaprasada*.

¹ 'Dhup' is the term for the dinner service of Lord Jagannath.

At this, Babaji Mahashaya said, "How God Himself takes care of His men when only they desire to sing His Name. How much more He would give to those who give themselves up to Him? He is so kind; hard-hearted we—we do not bend our knees in reverential regard of His boundless love, we are not melted with love in loving recognition of our tender relationship with the God of Love!"

They sat at the *pangat*,¹ and Babaji Mahashaya began the *dhvani*² in the middle of the service of *mahaprasada*.

They were in high glee as they partook of the *mahaprasada* in such company and retired to the shade of an extensive tree outside the gate of the Gundicha Mandir.

It was afternoon. Babaji Mahashaya was seated at ease beneath the tree. Men came in crowds to see him there and hear him speak. An old gentleman asked him why Lord Jagannath came to have the curious shape, which is not to be met with in any other image. Babaji Mahashaya bowed low and proceeded to answer him in the following way:

"One night Sri Krishna was asleep in His royal seraglio at Dvaraka,³ when the queens heard Him sigh and cry out, 'Where art thou, my beloved? Where art thou, my Radha dear?' With these words muttered in the midst of His sleep, He began to weep, and He wept so bitterly that Rukmini⁴ touched His feet and roused Him from His sleep. They asked Him why He was weeping and for whom. Sri Krishna felt

¹⁻² The '*pangat*' implies a band of devotees partaking in company of the *mahaprasada* of the Lord. It is customary to recite prayers or devotional songs in the course of the dinner, and these go by the name of '*dhvanis*' or spontaneous outbursts of devotional sentiment, which naturally flows from the lips of the devotees.

³ Dvaraka is modern Gujarat, where Krishna, the King, is said to have removed His capital from Mathura.

⁴ Rukmini is the chief of the Queen consorts of Sri Krishna at Dvaraka.

ashamed, and simply said that He did not know and could not remember why He wept, and He went to sleep again. The Queens, of course, were not satisfied with this evasive answer. They talked among themselves, 'Well, who might this be, this fortunate lady, who has captured the heart of our Lord? She must be a thousand times more fair and far more accomplished than us all. We are all princesses—royal blood flows in our veins, we are in no way inferior to any woman in the world. How comes it then that our Lord is hopelessly in love with another lady! This is very strange. He thinks of her by day and dreams of her at night. Who is this fair one that casts us into the shade and wins His heart?' Rukmini said she had heard of one Sri Radha, a cowherd girl of Vrindavan, with Whom their Lord was in love when He was there. He might be thinking of Her. Perhaps He could not forget Her even in their company. Devi Satyabhama¹ would not listen to this. She said, 'But then, She is after all a cowherd-girl. It is not possible that our Lord would prefer a shepherdess to the galaxy of princesses in His own harem. Let us do one thing. There is mother Rohini² here with us. She was there in Vrindavan. She knows it all. Let us go to her, she would enlighten us on this point.'

"Morning came. Sri Krishna washed Himself, performed the morning service, and attended the Court. He came back in due course, sat at the dinner with Uddhava³ and His friends, rested for a while, and then went out again to hold the afternoon Court. The Queens had their leisure at this time and availed themselves of this opportunity to have their

¹ The beloved Queen of Sri Krishna, the most spirited of all His Queens.

² Rohini is the mother of Balarama, the elder brother of Sri Krishna. She was living with her sons at Dvaraka.

³ The friend and Prime Minister of Lord Krishna at Dvaraka.

problem solved. Their feminine vanity was wounded and feminine curiosity raised to the highest, they would give themselves no rest till they heard all about Radha and Her love for their Lord. They ran to mother Rohini, told her what had happened, and entreated her to relate the romantic tale of the love-play of Vrindavan. She agreed, but she enjoined them strictly to be on their guard against the approach of Krishna and Balarama, Who would be inevitably drawn to hear the tale; for she could not as a mother tell the tale of Their love-making in Their presence. Accordingly, Subhadra, the sister of Krishna and Balarama, was placed as a sentinel on the doorway, with strict orders not to let in Her brothers under any pretext as long as the tale went. The mother sat in the center, and the queens in a circle all around, and she proceeded to unfold the amorous tale. Now, the charm of the tale was irresistible, and Krishna and Balarama left the Court and ran to the spot, where They found Subhadra standing in Their way. They asked Her to stand aside and let Them pass, but She let Them know that Mother Rohini had bidden Them not to enter at that time. They were not expected to know the reason why, but They must obey. So They obeyed, and stood there listening to the delectable conversation of the mother and the queens.

“When the mother described the *Rasa-lila*,¹ the signs and symptoms of love became manifest on Their physical frame. Streams of tears came down, and the sight of this brought tears to Subhadra’s eyes. All the three were shedding tears—copious tears of love and joy. Rohini began to explain the utter self-forgetfulness of Radha’s love—and Balarama could contain Himself no longer. He was lost, convulsed with indrawn passion, and His limbs themselves were indrawn by the

¹ Krishna dancing amongst Radha and the gopis.

current of internal commotion that raged in His chest. Rohini went on to delineate the Dalliance Scene, and Sri Krishna Himself was affected in a similar manner. His hands and feet were also shrunken and indrawn.¹ Subhadra was spell-bound, rooted to the spot where She stood. The three stood still and perfectly motionless, and Sudarshana² Itself was melted and lengthened out beside.

"Then came Narada,³ who could go anywhere he liked, on purpose to have a look at the Lord at Dvaraka. He came to the Court, where they told him the Lord was within His palace. He had the privilege of entering the harem, and so he entered; and, coming to the doorway, saw this sight and stood stock-still, for he had never seen anything like what met his eyes at that time. 'What could this mean!' he thought, and reflected within himself for some time. But then, when the mother changed the theme and spoke of Radha's distress after the separation, They came back to Themselves and all regained Their former condition. Narada at this time began to sing songs in praise of the Lord. The Lord was pleased, and said He would grant any boon to Narada at that golden moment. Narada asked Him to explain what he saw and prayed that that Quadri-partite Form might be manifested on

¹ We know from the life of Sri Chaitanya as recorded by the devotees, who were eye-witnesses to the scene, that the Lord-Devotee was sometimes found in such a condition—"like the tortoise in its shell," the description goes—and this historical fact should give life and color to the statement made above.

² This is the name of the *Chakra*, the characteristic weapon of the Lord.

³ The devotee *Rishi*—one of the primordial *Rishis*—the first-born, not of women born, but of the thought of Brahma, the Creator of the worlds. He holds the *vina* (stringed instrument) in his hand, to the tune of which he would sing hymns in praise of the Lord, and makes his tour wherever he would in the entire system of the fourteen *bhuvanas* (planes of existence) on purpose to help the manifestation of the *lilas* of the Lord.

earth to be seen by all without any restriction. The Lord said with a smile, 'So be it, my child; and so it shall be, for I have already given my word to King Indradyumna that I shall come down and manifest Myself in wood at Nilachal, and to Devi Vimala that I shall arrange for free indiscriminate distribution of the *mahaprasada* to all without exception. So, I shall fulfil the wishes of you three all, and they shall see Me in the wood at Nilachal.' Narada bowed low, and took his leave, singing and playing on his *vina* as he went. This is the origin of the Quadri-partite Manifestation of Lord Jagannath."

The old gentleman was delighted beyond measure to hear this beautiful exposition of the puzzling form of Lord Jagannath, and said, "Well, my child, this is very fine. Yet I would ask you one thing. The hearing of the play of Vrindavan changed the features of Sri Krishna, Balarama, Subhadra, and Sudarshana. But, how is it that Mother Rohini remained unchanged, and the queens that heard her to the last?" "The reason is plain," said our Babaji, "if we seek for it. It is *abhimana* (conceit) that stands in the way. The mother, who must necessarily be self-conscious, cannot but think she is the superior of her child; and the queens are vain-glorious of their greater possessions, superior beauty, higher lineage, better accomplishments, and all the rest. It is self-conceit that prevented them from entertaining the pure, selfless love of the *gopis* in their heart of hearts."

The old man was simply overjoyed as he rushed forward to embrace Babaji Mahashaya, and poured down his blessings on him. Babaji Mahashaya respectfully bent himself down, as the crowd gave out cheers of 'Haribol!'

CHAPTER 11

ON WAY TO BENGAL

After some time Barha Babaji Mahashaya decided to go to Bengal. He started on foot. He took only four or five persons with him and left Govinda Das Krishnananda, Shital Das and others in Puri for performing *sankirtan* every day in the Temple of Jagannath and for the service of the foot-prints of Mahaprabhu. Before leaving he offered obeisance to Lord Jagannath and took leave of Him with tears in his eyes. On the way he stopped for a night for the *darshan* of Sakshi Gopal and started the next day for Bhuvaneshwar.

RAMA BEHARA, THE COWHERD

After going about 10 or 12 miles he met a cowherd, Rama Behara by name. Rama Behara was so poor that it was difficult for him to make even two square meals a day for himself and his wife. To add to his misfortune he had lost his only son and had to suffer the additional burden of supporting his widowed daughter-in-law. The villagers had no sympathy for him, because besides being a destitute he was arrogant and irreligious. But on seeing Barha Babaji Mahashaya and his party passing through the village, singing aloud the Name of the Lord and dancing with tears incessantly flowing from

theirs eyes, a mysterious change came upon him. With folded hands he stood before them blocking their way, and requested that they might stop in the village for a day and have their meals at his place. Barha Baba agreed. Rama Behara was overjoyed. He went running to his wife and asked her to prepare the meal for everybody. The poor lady looked at him dazedly, for she had no provisions at all that day. But she said nothing and went out to borrow the provisions from her neighbours.

Barha Babaji Mahashaya could understand the situation. His heart melted. He said to Rama Behara, "Brother! it is enough that you have invited us. We are so grateful to you. But you need not worry about the meal. If Mahaprabhu wills, you will have a feast at your door, in which not only we, but everyone else in the village will participate and you will not have to do anything." So saying he started *sankirtan* with renewed vigour. The soul-stirring and heart-rending sound of the *sankirtan* attracted the villagers. They poured in from different directions and joined the *sankirtan*. They were all transported into bliss, the like of which they had never experienced before.

After *sankirtan* a number of them invited Barha Babaji Mahashaya and his party to take their meals at their homes. Barha Babaji said, "Brethren, just now I am the guest of this poor cowherd. It would not be proper for me to go and eat elsewhere." At this an old Brahmin suggested, "Why not we all bring provisions from our homes and have a feast here?" Everybody readily agreed. Provisions started coming. Each brought rice, pulses, vegetables and other things according to his capacity, and within a short time provisions for about forty persons were collected. Babaji Mahashaya asked his disciples to start cooking.

Meanwhile Rama Behara fell at the feet of Barha Babaji

and said, "Maharaja! I am inspired to believe that you are my saviour and have come to deliver me from the bondage of *Maya*. I must surrender at your feet and pray for *diksha*. If you do not show mercy on me, I do not know what my fate is going to be."

Barha Babaji lifted him up and with a loving embrace and tears in his eyes whispered the *diksa-mantra* into his ear. Navadwip Das and others shouted "*Jai Nitai!*" and began to dance with joy. At Rama Behara's request Barha Babaji also gave *diksha* to his wife and daughter-in-law.

After the food was ready and *bhoga* offered to the Lord, Barha Babaji Mahashaya asked the villagers to sit down in a line for taking *prasada*. But they requested that Babaji Mahashaya and his companions must eat first. They had to comply. After they had eaten the villagers sat down to eat. Brahmins and non-Brahmins ate together without any distinction of caste or creed. As they were eating they shouted, "*Nityananda Ki Jai!*" and "*Barha Babaji Mahashaya Ki Jai!*" It was surprising that although food was prepared for only forty people, as many as one hundred and twenty-five ate to their full satisfaction. The people attributed this to the inconceivable power of Barha Babaji Mahashaya and said that they had never met such a *mahapurusha* before.

Barha Babaji stayed in the village for the night. The next morning the villagers came to request him to stay on in the village for a day or two more. Rama Behara came and fell at his feet and said, "Gurudeva! you have out of infinite kindness accepted me as your disciple. But I am a great sinner. I do not know if there is any hope for me. Kindly let me know what I should do to expiate my sins and to attain the feet of the Lord?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "Do not worry. Chant the Name of the Lord. The Name will wash away all your sins. Regard

yourself as the lowliest of the lowly. Do not talk ill of others. Do not bear malice against any one. Resign yourself completely to the will of the Lord. The Lord will certainly have mercy upon you."

Baba gave these precepts to Rama Behara and through him to the people of the village, and set off for Bhuvaneshwar, singing the Name of the Lord and tripping and dancing as he went.

Rama Behara was no more the Rama Behara of old. Now, he was not shunned and neglected by the people of the village anymore, but loved and respected by them all. A day of contact with Barha Babaji Mahashaya had converted him from a sinner into a saint. By his mercy he was spiritually changed as well as materially. He had become the spiritual guide of the people of the village. They came to him for advice and stayed with him for peace. His material condition had so changed that he could now entertain one or two guests everyday without borrowing from his neighbours.

Barha Babaji walked ten or twelve miles a day. Every village at which he stopped witnessed unprecedented scene of religious fervor and festivity, dominated by *sankirtan*. At every place some people took initiation from him and turned a new leaf in their life.

THE DRUNKEN BABU

After Barha Babaji had crossed Bhuvaneshwar and Khandagiri, one day, when he and his companions were tired, they were resting on one side of the road under a tree. A Babu (gentlemen), who was learned but engrossed in materialistic life, happened to come and ask arrogantly:

"Where do you live?"

"We do not have a home," replied Baba.

"Then, do you live on tree-tops?"

"That also is not certain."

"Then you must be thieves."

"We are not thieves, but certainly we are the companions of a thief."

"Then you shall be handed over to the police and tried in a Court."

"We would ourselves like to be tried, but in the Highest Court, after which there is no appeal."

Everyone laughed, but the Babu said angrily, "If you are not thieves tell me now what is your profession, and how you earn your livelihood?"

"We have no profession. We only chant the Name of the Lord and roam about. The Lord is very kind. He takes care of us and always provides us food through one person or the other."

The Babu laughed sarcastically. Just then a devotee came from the nearby village and said entreatingly, "If you kindly permit I may arrange for your meal."

Babaji said, "As you please. We have no objection."

Babu was stupefied. It was apparent that he was drunk. His drunkenness subsided gradually and he realized that the men with whom he was talking were genuine *sadhus*, who had renounced the world. He continued to talk, but there was perceptible change in his tone. He asked, "May I know where you are going?"

"God knows" replied Babaji Mahashaya.

"But who is God?"

"God is the Eternal Lord, creator, destroyer and controller of the Universe."

"Creation and destruction take place according to the union and disunion of atoms. The sun, the moon, the stars and every other thing in the universe functions uniformly and

systematically according to the laws of nature. Where then is the necessity of believing in a super-creator, destroyer and controller?"

Baba said, "Granting that creation and dissolution take place according to the union and disunion of atoms, the question is who brings the atoms and electrons together in particular numbers and in a particular manner and proportion to create a particular object that would serve a particular purpose? The atoms themselves cannot do this, because they are inanimate and unintelligent. This must be the work of an all-powerful and intelligent Being, Whom we call God. The so called laws of nature must also be the laws given to nature by an intelligent Being, because nature exhibits purpose. For instance, at the time of child-birth the mother's blood turns into the milk of her breast, because the child is to be fed. As the child grows teeth come out, because he has to eat, and so on. Can the activities of unintelligent nature be purposeful?"

The Babu seemed to be impressed. But he said, "Still how can we believe in a God, because seeing is believing, and God is nowhere to be seen?"

Baba Mahashaya said with a smile, "But do you really see everything that you believe? You certainly believe that your forefathers once lived in this world, though you have never seen them. You believe that all the countries, rivers and mountains shown on the world-map exist although you have not seen them all. You believe that the atoms exist and the world is the result of their union, but have you ever seen atoms?"

Babu replied, "Maharaja! I believe in all those things without seeing them, because there are others who have seen them!"

Again Baba said smilingly, "Is it not strange then that you believe in so many things, because others have seen

them, but you do not believe in God for the same reason. You have faith in the people of this world from whom you derive your knowledge of things that you have not seen. But you do not have faith in the *Rishis* of old, and the saints and seers of your own time who have realized God, and who promise to show Him to you face to face just as you see me—only if you walk in their steps. You do not lose much if you disbelieve the people of the world. But have you ever thought of what you lose, if you do not believe those seers? You lose the great opportunity offered to you in this birth of freeing yourself from the bondage of *Maya* and all the suffering caused by the never ending cycle of birth and death and becoming a denizen of the world, where the love-dance of Krishna and the *gopis* is eternally going on and peace and happiness reign supreme.”

The Babu was now touched and thrilled to the core. The veil of ignorance was temporarily lifted and a new vista of hope and lighting opened up to him. Obviously this was not due so much to the arguments of Babaji Mahashaya as to the impact of his powerful personality and infinite kindness. The Babu fell at his feet with tears in his eyes and said, “Maharaja! I am a great sinner and drunkard. People shun me and keep away from me. But you have out of your infinite kindness pulled me out of hell and shown me the way to the kingdom of God and eternal happiness. I am now completely sold out to you. I shall always cling to your holy feet like your dog. Please do not kick me off.”

By this time the aforesaid devotee had returned with provisions and a number of people from the village. They were all surprised to see the change that had suddenly come upon the Babu, who in his drunkenness used to be a terror to the villagers and the passersby. They began to say to each other, “This must be due to the supernatural power of the

great saint, we have the good fortune to meet today. He is certainly not an ordinary saint, but a *siddha-mahapurusha*."

Soon the food was ready. It was offered to the Lord and everybody sat down to eat. Babaji Mahashaya made the Babu sit in front of him. The Babu was eating and tears of joy, penitence and gratitude were incessantly flowing from his eyes.

Babaji Mahashaya was requested by a shopkeeper to stay at his house for the night. He agreed. He performed *sankirtan* at the shopkeeper's house till 12 o'clock at night. A number of villagers including the Babu sang and danced in the *kirtan*. The next morning Baba started on his onward journey. Some of the villagers who did not want to leave his company so soon, began to walk with him. He persuaded them with sweet words to return. But the Babu, whose name was Ramadhan Gangopadhyaya remained with him.

After eight days Barha Babaji Mahashaya reached Remuna, where exists the temple of the famous Gopinath, who had stolen *khir*¹ for His favourite devotee Madhavendra Puri. In the courtyard of the temple Baba Mahashaya performed *sankirtan* till late at night. The love-current that ensued from the *sankirtan* swept the people of Remuna away and brought them into a land of ecstasy and delight, such as they had never experienced before.

Next morning Ramadhan Babu came and fell at Baba Mahashaya's feet. Baba lifted him up and gave him a loving embrace. He saw that Ramadhan wanted to say something, but could not muster courage to say. He, therefore, said, "Do not worry. Only be pure in thought, word and deed. Nityananda will surely have mercy on you."

Ramadhan broke into tears and said, "Maharaja! you

¹ A dish made of rice, milk and sugar.

have already pulled me out of hell. Bless me so that I may not fall again. Accept me as your humble servant by giving me *mantra* here and now." Baba Mahashaya again gave him a loving embrace and uttered the *mantra* in his ear.

Ramadhan not only gave up meat and wine, he was now for all practical purpose a recluse, and practised *bhajan* day and night. People, who used to shun him away began to respect him like a *Rishi*.

A NIGHT WITH A BEGGAR

Barha Babaji Mahashaya was about to start on his onward journey when some devotees came and said, "Maharaja! if you change the course of your journey a little, we would like to take you to Mayurabhanj. There is a beautiful Temple of Lord Jagannath there and Sri Vrindavan Babu, the cousin of the Raja of Mayurabhanj is a great devotee. You would very much enjoy your visit there." Baba Mahashaya agreed and set off in the direction pointed out by the devotees. He said to his companions, "Today we shall walk on without resting anywhere until we have covered about twenty or twenty-five miles." So saying he tripped off dancing and singing the Name of the Lord. But after he had gone only about seven miles, a devotee saw him and said, "Babaji Maharaja! I am a beggar, but I shall feel greatly obliged if you kindly consent to be my guest and eat whatever I have obtained in *bhiksha*¹ today." Baba Mahashaya looked at him tenderly but did not know what to say. The beggar continued, "Four days ago I saw in a dream that a *mahapurusha* came to my house dancing and singing the Name of the Lord and asked for something to eat. I replied, 'I am beggar. I hardly have any good things to offer.'

¹ Alms collected by begging.

But the *mahapurusha* said, 'Our Lord Nityananda is fond of anything that is obtained in *bhiksha*. So we shall gladly offer to our Lord whatever you get in *bhiksha* and eat the same.' I then went out for *bhiksha*. I know that you are the same *mahapurusha* and I shall not let you go." So saying he fell at the feet of Baba Mahashaya and began to weep.

Navadwip Das and others began to say, "Now let us see who wins. Dada Mahashaya must walk twenty-four miles at a stretch, while the devotee must stop him." No wonder that it was the devotee who won. If the Lord Himself can go back upon His promises and resolutions for the sake of a devotee, why not a saint, who has realized Him and in whom inhere all His qualities?

So Babaji Mahashaya had to stop. The devotee had some rice and pulses with him. He went out and begged for some more. Navadwip Das, as usual, cooked and they ate after offering the food to the Lord. The food begged and offered lovingly by the devotee was found to be superb in taste.

At the request of the beggar devotee Babaji Mahashaya had to stay at his place till next morning, when he started for Mayurabhanj. When he reached Mayurabhanj the news spread that a great saint had visited the state. Sri Vrindavan Bhanj, the cousin of Raja Ram Chandra Bhanj received him and his party and took them to the Temple of Jagannath. He made adequate arrangements for their stay and *prasada*, and appointed the officials of the state to look to their needs and comforts.

Mayurabhanj wore a festive look. *Sankirtan* and dance dominated the scene throughout the day and night. The next day after the morning *arati-kirtan* Babaji Mahashaya wanted to leave, but he could not turn down the request of Vrindavan Babu to stay on at least for one more day, which he spent particularly in talks with him on Krishna and His *lila*. At last,

when Babaji Mahashaya was leaving, Vrindavan Babu insisted on his accepting some money for his onward journey. Baba refused, because he never accepted money from anyone.

THE NAUGHTY PRINCE

As Babaji Mahashaya was going, he and his companions were singing "*Gaura Haribol!*" and dancing. The young prince of Nilgiri, sitting on a chair in the verandah of the second floor of his house, was watching them scornfully. The pride of lineage, youth and wealth had made him so arrogant that instead of getting up out of respect for the *sankirtan* and doing obeisances to it, he stretched his legs and began to dangle them almost over the head of the *sankirtan* party as it passed by his house. After the party had gone some distance the chair on which the prince was sitting turned and he fell down on the street. A hue and cry was raised all around. Many people came running. Vrindavan Babu also came. He asked the prince how he had fallen. He replied, "I was sitting on the chair in the verandah on the second floor. Some *sadhus* passed along my house singing '*Gaura Haribol!*' After they had gone some distance someone suddenly turned my chair and I fell. As I fell the words '*Gaura Haribol,*' which were persevering in my mind automatically came out of my mouth. Just then I saw that the tall *mahatma*, who was dancing and singing as the head of the party took me in his lap and laid me on the ground. His touch made a thrill pass through my veins and my hair stood on end. I must now see that *mahapurusha* once. I cannot live without his *darshan*."

Vrindavan Babu immediately sent four or five persons to apprise Babaji Mahashaya of the situation and to request him to come back if only for a short while to give *darshan* to the fallen prince. Baba Mahashaya came dancing and singing.

The prince fell prostrate at his feet with tears in his eyes. Baba blessed him and made him sit by his side. The prince tried to say something, but could not, because his throat was choked with emotion. Vrindavan Babu said, "Maharaja! it appears that the Rajakumar (prince) committed some offense at your feet. You did not take notice of it, because you are by nature forgiving and merciful. But Nityananda could not tolerate the offense committed against you and therefore he punished him."

Baba Mahashaya exclaimed, "Nitai! Nitai! Don't say like that. Nityananda Prabhu does not take offense. On the other hand he clasps the offender close to his heart and gives him Krishna-*prema*. If he were to take people's offenses, who would deliver them from bondage? In Nitai Chand's reign of love there is no such thing as offense."

The Rajakumar was listening all this with eyes cast downwards like an offender and penitential tears were incessantly streaming out of his eyes. The erstwhile proud and arrogant Rajakumar, who used to deride and insult the *sadhus* had suddenly become humble, submissive and respectful towards everybody by the magic touch of Babaji Mahashaya.

Babaji Mahashaya had to stay in Mayurabhanj that day on the insistence of Vrindavan Babu and the people of Mayurabhanj. The next morning with great difficulty he took leave of them and started for Gopivallabhpur. He left an impression upon their minds, which they treasured all their life. They often talked about him. Someone said that he was a *siddha-mahapurusha*, some said that he was a close associate of Mahaprabhu, while others said that they believed he was no other than Nityananda Prabhu Himself.

THE STORY OF SHYAMANANDA

Barha Babaji Mahashaya and his party reached

Gopivallabhpur and had the *darshan* of Radha-Govinda deities in the famous Temple of Radha-Govinda Deva, installed and worshipped by Shyamananda Prabhu, a close associate of Sri Srinivas Acharya and Narottama Das Thakura. An old man came and asked, "Baba! May I know where you live?" Baba replied, "We do not have a definite place to live. We are carried from place to place by Nityananda Prabhu's will. Just now we are being carried to Bengal. But it seems that Radharani has brought us here, because we had an intense desire for the *darshan* of Sri Govinda Deva."

"Very well," said the old man, "I have offered special *bhoga* to Govinda Deva and shall be obliged if you all take *prasada*."

As the old man said this tears of love and gratitude towards Govinda Deva trickled down Baba's eyes, because for him it was not the old man, but Govinda Deva, who had extended the invitation and made special arrangements for *prasada*. Babaji Mahashaya and his party took *prasada* and then retired to a secluded place under a tree to avoid the company of people and rest for a while. But their fame had reached Gopivallabhapur even before them, and the people had been anxiously waiting for their arrival. They started coming one by one attracted by their *bhakti* even as the black bees are attracted automatically to a flower by its fragrance.

One of them said, "Maharaja! May we hear from you the life-story of Sri Shyamananda?" Baba Mahashaya said, "Surely, I do not know of a better way of purifying one's self than narrating or listening to the life-stories of the devotees of the Lord." He then narrated the story as follows:

"Shyamananda's original name was 'Dukhi,' which means 'one who is unhappy.' He was so named by his parents because a number of his brothers and sisters had died before

his birth. But he was really unhappy with the world from the very beginning and yearned for a guru, who could deliver him from the bondage of *Maya*. As soon as he came of age he went to Ambika Kalna and took initiation from Sri Hridaya Chaitanya, a disciple of Gauridas Pandit, attracted by whose love Gaura-Nitai had gone to him and were compelled to remain with him for ever in the form of *vigrahas*.¹ Hridaya Chaitanya called him Dukhi Krishnadas. From that time he became known as Dukhi Krishnadas. He remained with the guru to serve him, because he believed that the service of the guru was the highest form of *sadhana*. As enjoined by the guru he used to bring from the river Ganges all the water that was needed in the Temple of Gaura-Nitai. He had to bring so many pitchers of water on his head every day that after some time he developed a wound over his head. Still he continued his service without letting anyone know about it, because he was afraid that if gurudeva knew about it, he would be deprived of the service. But gurudeva did come to know about it one day. He was very much pleased by his dedication. He saw in him symptoms of a great Vaishnava-*acharya* and preacher in the making. With a view to equip him thoroughly for the great role he asked him to go to Vrindavan and study *shastras* from Sri Jiva Goswami.² Dukhi Krishnadas had to obey.

"He went to Vrindavan and surrendered himself at the feet of Sri Jiva. Jiva Goswami was pleased to have a pupil like him. Within a short time Dukhi Krishnadas mastered all the *shastras*. His study of the *shastras* convinced him that *seva* and *seva* alone was the highest form of *bhajan*. He, therefore, took

¹ It is the form or image of the Lord, duly installed as deity and worshipped.

² One of the six famous Gaudiya Goswamis of Vrindavan, who compiled many philosophical works for the Gaudiya Sampradaya.

upon himself the task of sweeping the Nikunja Mandir, where Sri Krishna was supposed to dally with the milk-maids of Vraja, every night.

"The service soon bore fruit. One day, when he was sweeping outside the Nikunja Mandir, he saw a golden *nupura*¹ lying on the way. The very sight of the *nupura* filled him with *sattvika-bhavas*. He understood that it was the *nupura* of Radharani. He picked it up and began to put it over his head and sometimes close to his heart, and weep and say, "O Mistress of my heart! If Thou art so kind to me, why not give me *darshan* and soothe my heart. How can I live without seeing Thee?" He said this and cried, and repeatedly called Radharani in deep anguish.

"At this time Radharani had gone only some distance from Nikunjavana, when She discovered that She had lost one *nupura*. She said to Lalita, "O Sakhi! I have dropped my *nupura* somewhere. Go and find it out." Lalita went to Nikunjavana in the guise of an eleven year old Vrajavasi-girl. She saw Dukhi Krishnadas there and asked him whether he had found a golden *nupura* somewhere there. He replied, "Yes I have found. It is here."

'Give it to me' said Lalita

'Is it yours?'

'No, not mine, but my sister's!'

'Then why has your sister not come?'

'She cannot come, because She is not an ordinary girl, but a princess.'

'But how can I know that it really belongs to Her. She must come. I will then compare it with Her other *nupura* and put it round Her ankle with my own hand.'

"Lalita then understood that he was a favourite of

¹ A tinkling ornament worn by the ladies around their ankles.

Radharani and She had Herself dropped the *nupura* there with the purpose of showing mercy upon him. So she went and came back with Radharani in the guise of a Vrajavasi-girl of her own age.

“Radharani asked Dukhi Krishnadas to give Her the *nupura*. Krishnadas asked Her, ‘But why did you come to this lonely place at night?’ Radharani replied, ‘Oh! this is my Nikunja Mandir. You know why I come here. Now don’t delay. Give me the *nupura*. Dawn is approaching and I have to go home soon.’

“Krishnadas gave Her the *nupura*, but said, ‘*Svamini!*¹ If you are so kind to me why not give me *darshan* in your real form,’ and broke into tears. Radharani laughed and said, ‘How can you see my real form with material eyes?’ But Lalita urged, ‘O *Pyari!*² Since You are already so kindly disposed towards him, why not also give him *shakti* to see You?’ Radharani then gave him the required *shakti* and appeared before him in Her real form. She touched his forehead with Her dust-stained *nupura* so as to mark a *tilaka* and said, ‘Let this *tilaka* remain on your forehead as a mark of your single-minded devotion to the guru and perseverance in service, so that the people of the world may know that there is nothing that cannot be achieved by this means.’ The touch of Radharani’s hand sent a thrill of transcendental love and bliss throughout his body and he fell senseless on the ground.

“When Dukhi Krishnadas came to his senses, he saw that both Radharani and Lalita had disappeared. Shedding tears of love in separation he went to Jiva Goswami and told him everything. Sri Jiva said, ‘Since Shyamaji (Radharani) has showered Her mercy and blessings upon you, your name from

¹ Mistress of my heart.

² Beloved one.

today shall be Shyamananda and not Dukhi (unhappy) Krishnadas, and your *tilaka* shall be of the shape of *nupura*, which Radharani with Her own hands marked on your forehead.'

"Sometime later someone, who went to Ambika Kalna, told Sri Hridaya Chaitanya that Dukhi Krishnadas had abandoned him and accepted Jiva Goswami as his guru and therefore his name and *tilaka* had changed. Hridaya Chaitanya was surprised. He wrote a letter to Sri Jiva requesting him to send Dukhi Krishnadas. Krishnadas came back and fell at the feet of Gurudeva. Gurudeva asked him, 'Who has changed your *tilaka*?'"

"Shyamananda replied, 'You have changed Gurudeva.'

'Who has changed your name?' he asked again.

"Shyamananda again replied, 'You Gurudeva. Who else can?'

"Shyamananda had answered correctly, because he firmly believed that whatever happened, happened according to the will of the guru. But Hridaya Chaitanya said, 'If I have changed your *tilaka*, I ask you to wipe it off and put on the *tilaka* I had given you before.'

"Shyamananda said, 'Gurudeva! since you have given me this *tilaka* you can yourself wipe it.'

"Hridaya Chaitanya tried to wipe off the *tilaka*, but the more he wiped it, the brighter it became. He was surprised. He meditated for a while and came to know everything. Then with tears in his eyes he clasped Shyamananda and said, 'Dear child! your *bhakti* is genuine. It is on account of your devotion to the guru that you have been so blessed by Radharani. I take a lesson from you.' Hridaya Chaitanya then entrusted to him the *seva* of the Sri-vigraha of Sri Radha-Govinda brought from Vrindavan. The *vigraha* in the temple we see now is the same."

Babaji Mahashaya added at the end, "You see how quick Radharani is to reward a person for his sincere devotion to the guru and the slightest service lovingly rendered to Her."

Just then the bell rang for the evening *arati* of Radha-Govinda. Babaji Mahashaya danced and performed *kirtan* before Radha-Govinda. After *arati*, *prasada* was served to Babaji and his party.

The next day Babaji Mahashaya left for Calcutta after politely expressing his inability to comply with the request of the people of Gopivallabhpur to stay there some time more.

CHAPTER 12

THE QUEST: END AND MEANS

Soon Babaji Mahashaya reached Calcutta. He went to Jagannath Ghat for bathing in the Ganges. After he had taken his bath he asked his companions to go and bathe. When they returned to the *ghat* after bathing they saw that Babaji Mahashaya was not there. They searched him all round, but he was not to be found anywhere. There was no end to their grief. Each one of them began to feel like one whose life and soul was gone. Just then a gentleman came and said, "Babaji has gone to an unknown place. You will find him in Navadwip after some time. He has asked me to convey this message to you." This gave them some relief. They went to Navadwip, and there they kept waiting for him.

Where could Babaji Mahashaya have gone and what for? It would have been impossible for us to answer this question if he had not left his own memoirs regarding his activities during this period. Two things are clear from the memoirs. One is that after he had completed his journey up to Nilachal as directed by his guru, he went to him for further light and instructions. The other is his concern for the fallen, the weak and the woe-stricken people of this age of Kali, who want to seek deliverance from *Maya*, but are lost in the labyrinth of so many religions, each prescribing its own path for eternal peace and happiness. He wanted to find for them the purest

and easiest path by reflection, by experiment and by revelation. In the memoirs he first describes the result of his reflection allegorically, as it seems, then the result of his experiments in yoga and finally the result of the revelation he had at the feet of the guru.

The following is an adaptation from the memoirs written in Bengali:

"We are sojourners in this world, come to offer our worship to the Lord of ourselves and all the worlds, the Lord, that is within, without, and beyond. Whoever sees this, sees the truth. For him there is no misery and torment in life or in death. But whosoever fails to realize this simple truth becomes a prey to the manifold miseries and maladies that afflict the erring sons of men on earth. Peace and blessedness come to the man who is in the light, tumult and discontent to the man, who walks in ignorance and gropes his way through fog and mist he knows not where.

"It was in this misty mood that I, the soul, set out on my weary journey in quest of peace in the wilderness of the world. It was one of those moments which come to us all some time or another in the course of our lives, when we grow sick of our wealth and position, tired of our friends and relations, and desire to be alone to look into ourselves, to seek and find out the hidden treasure we have lost in our headlong march and mad intercourse with the work-a-day world. We pause and find we have lost our peace, our peace of mind, which alone makes us happy, without which the wealth of Croesuses is as nothing and the glory and honour of Caesars and Napoleons but idle breaths full of sound and fury signifying nothing. We want peace, and that above all things else in the world. But where is peace? Where? Oh, where? Where is peace to be found?

"I began to reflect how peace could be attained, and came to the conclusion that it must attach itself to the everlasting Truth, if such there be, for peace was not to be had in the market of the ephemeral shows of the evanescent world. So, if this Truth could be discerned in the light of reason, held fast in the firm grip of an unflinching faith, and slowly but steadily and surely approached on the definite lines and paths prescribed by men that had gone the same way and reached the goal, why, then the end might be gained, and we might get the lasting peace for which we all strive in life. But, who am I—I, that wants this peace to soothe myself? I questioned myself 'Whence, do you come, good fellow? You are so moody, you change color every moment and look so different at different times. Now you are in the seventh heaven of joy, and then you are down in the depth of misery and despair, while at other times you steer a middle course. You are so, neither too happy, nor too unhappy in life. Sometimes you are touched with compassion at the distress of your brethren, but there comes a time when you are ready to cut the throat of your own fellowmen. Sometimes you are hungry, you would beg your bread in the streets, but afterwards you loathe your food and turn away in disgust. Sometimes you are asleep, sometimes awake. Sometimes you let your senses run wild, and you would die of a broken heart to lose your objects of sensual gratification, while at other times you have the heart to renounce the pleasures ready at hand for your enjoyment. What madness to refuse what you would have welcomed, what you had longed for, what you formerly set your heart upon! What reason to hanker after things which failed to satisfy you when they were yours, to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of joys in the world, to strive to multiply your wants in your attempt to remove them! Sometimes you are puffed up to think you are the master of all you survey, and again you

are but a lackey, a mean sycophant, in abject servility bound to your earthly lord. So you go on changing your part and feelings every moment of your life. Who are you, my friend, my funny fellow? Who brings you here? I would like to know.'

"With this thought in mind I went about and found a woman in labor, who forthwith gave birth to a child. It began to cry as soon as it saw the light of the world. The mother gave suck, and it went to sleep in her arms. I thought of the Doctrine of Heredity. I came to be born of my parents, from whom I derive my features and bodily constitution. My mental frame, nature and temperament, tendencies and dispositions, and even my knowledge to a certain extent, all these I owe to the experience of my parents, who gave me all these when they pushed me forth into the world. But whence do they derive all that they bestowed on me? From their parents? Whence they? And so on.¹ Thus, arguing on, I came to a point where our finite intelligence comes to a dead halt and gasps for a solution of the Great Infinite, that is at the root of, and directs all the operations of all Creation.² Now, what is the ultimate cause of this Creation?—the infinite. What is the working principle?—the Infinite again, working in and through creation. What is the end of Creation?—the same Infinite, which hems us in on all sides around. Who will tell me what it is—this Infinite—this great beyond, which pervades and permeates all universe, the great self which is at the root of the smaller selves we call ourselves, the perfection aimed at in our philosophy—the great fullness of things where want is not, and privation is not, and sorrow and misery is

¹ Then again there is the old question of idiots and geniuses being born of parents who had nothing in common with the naturals and the prodigies.

² Ah! it is come, this idea of God and the Infinite; I tried to avoid it, but no; it will come, it is innate in us, it is inevitable, irresistible one must say, whoever has the sincerity to speak out the truth.

hushed into the repose and rest of blessedness and peace—the thing of things we are striving consciously or unconsciously to attain to make the most of our lives? This was the question now, and I wandered here and there questioning men I came across if they could throw any light on what I had in my heart. I was intuitively convinced of this Overmastering Presence, I could not help it, as nobody can whoever he is and wherever his lot is cast in whatever part of the world, and felt somehow that here was the solution of the problem of life. Here was the spring of all philosophy, the fountain-head of the religions of the world.

“I met a scientist and he gave me a very easy matter-of-fact explanation of the origin of things. ‘It is all Nature,’ he let me know, ‘all things are naturally coming into being and disappearing as naturally to reappear in another form; and so is man, he is born, he lives for a time, and then he is dead, that’s all. Fact is fact, there you are, we need not bother ourselves about the Creator of the world.’ I heard him, but his explanation was very unsatisfactory. He would take things as they are, and births and deaths were to him brought on by chance or accident, which, to my mind, was only an alias of ignorance. He simply evaded the question and missed the point of my inquiry.

“Then I met a *sannyasi*, and he said, ‘Well, you and I, and this and that, births and deaths and all the world is *Maya* or Illusion. It is all *Brahman*, and *Brahman* is the truth. This *Brahman* is *jnana* itself, the truth, the spirit, and the bliss of bliss. It is like ether, like air, you may say, which takes the shape of the pot only so long as there is a pot to shut it in, but the moment the pot is broken, it is air, without a name and a form to limit its ample existence. Even so is *Brahman*, the *jiva*, as long as ignorance teaches you to believe that you are bound up to a body with a name and a form, but the moment disillusion comes, *Brahman* is *Brahman* and there is no *jiva* to chain it down to the finitudes of fantastic phenomena of the illusory world. Why this is *nirvana*,

this is *mukti*—the *moksha*, which means the absolute cessation of all troubles—troubles that are inseparably associated with the body and felt in the mind chained down to the body. Cultivate the Vedanta, I say, give your days and nights to the study of the *mahavakyas*: 'Thou art that,' 'I am *Brahma*,' 'The *Brahman* is the Truth' and the rest; and you shall come to the realization of the 'One, without a second,' you shall become *Brahman* and thus end the miseries of existence on earth.'

"This was decidedly better than what I heard before. But my soul would not listen to it. Something was wanting still, and I wondered what it could be and how I could have access to it. This system consisted in total abnegation, negation of the world, negation of the body and the bodily organs, negation of the mind and the processes of the mind, negation of all connections with things external and internal, negation of all the things that we feel to be the realities of life. It was a process of elimination after all, and when it was complete, it might lead to the solution of the Equation of the Great Unknown, but it was so unnatural, this way of discerning the Truth, so dry and cold this rocky ascent to the Highland of Bliss.

"I resumed my journey and lighted upon a yogi, who taught me that we must seek within and there we shall get the desideratum of our souls. He was an advocate of the system of Patanjali. He said, 'We must first of all practise the *Yamas*,¹ the *Niyamas*,² and the *Asanas*,³ and then the *Pranayama*⁴ and

¹ The *Yamas* are five in number: *Ahimsa* (harmlessness), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (continence), and *Aparigraha* (non-acceptance of gifts).

² The *Niyamas* are: *Tapas* (austerities), *Santosha* (contentment), *Saucha* (cleanliness), *Svadyaya* (sacred studies), and *Ishvara-Pranidhanam* (resignation).

³ *Asanas* are prescribed postures for sitting still at ease for a long time.

⁴ *Pranayama* is controlling the breath for controlling the mind.

the *Pratyahara*,¹ after which, when the senses are properly bridled and the mind is calmed down to a state of rest, we should practise concentration to realize the end and aim of our lives. By these means, the *Kula-kundalini*,² which under normal conditions is asleep, will be roused into activity and stream up the channel of the *Sushumna*,³ making its way through the six *Chakras* or *Padmas*⁴ till at last it takes the *Jivatma*⁵ to the *Sahasrara*,⁶ where the *Jivatma*, the soul, is united with and completely merged in the *Paramatma*, the Oversoul. The process of concentration again admits of three successive stages: the *Dharana*,⁷ the *Dhyana*,⁸ and the *Samadhi*,⁹ which last means complete union with *Paramatma*—the *summum bonum* of our life. All this is to be felt and experienced in the heart, my child, it is all within, you see, and not without; come and practise, and you will see it all yourself.

"I set to work according to his directions for some time, and I felt the quiescent state of the mind hitherto unfelt

¹ *Pratyahara* is withdrawing the mind from the world of the senses.

²⁻⁶ *Kula-Kundalini* is the spiritual energy, which lies coiled up, as it were, under normal condition in the nethermost regions at the root of the genital organs—the *moladhar*, as it is called—and which, stimulated by proper practices on the lines indicated above, bestirs itself and makes its way up the channel of the *Sushumna* through the *Svadhishthan* and the *Manipura* (near about the navel), the *Anakata* (in the heart) the *Bishuddha* (behind the larynx), and *Agha* (at the root of the nose), till at last it reaches the *Sahasrara-Padmna* over the head, where the soul ultimately loses itself in the Oversoul.

⁷⁻⁹ These are only the three different stages of the process of concentration. When the mind can be kept riveted on the object only as long as a mustard seed rests on the horn of the cow, we have what is called *Dharana*. When, however, the mind is so trained that it can contemplate its object as uninterruptedly as the constant flow of oil as it is poured from one pot to another, then we have attained the *Dhyana* stage. Afterwards, when the mind is perfectly at rest, like the pacific sea untossed by waves, then it is *Samadhi*, and the end of Yoga is attained.

in the bustle of the world and had the finer experiences of lustre and color and the *Nada*¹ and all the rest, but I was not perfectly satisfied with all these, because they did not fully respond to the call for the Infinite, the Infinite Reservoir of Sweetness and Light that was rising from the depth of my soul.

"So I left off and set out in my quest again till at last I met my gurudeva on the bank of the Saraju. I fell at his feet and requested for light. He said, "My child, Infinite Sweetness and Light lie at the lotus-feet of Sri Hari. Hari is here, for all this is in Him. You cannot see Him, simply because you let your soul run out through the channels of your senses. You are in a whirlwind, so to speak, and you give yourself no rest to think of yourself. That is why you are in unrest and in want of peace that is already yours and you do not know. We are all servants of the Lord, you see, that is what we are. We are essentially the same, the Lord and the servant in tender relation bound one to the other and to all. We have somehow managed to forget this, and that is why we suffer from the nightmare of joys and moans in life. But the grace of God is there on us all, and we can try to gain His favour. There are so many ways in which it can be done, but mainly three: *Jnana*, *Yoga* and *Bhakti* (Devotion). The three are better united than pursued separately and distinctly from one another. Call it *Brahman*, *Paramatma*, or the Lord, you mean the same thing, for there is no other in the domain of eternal truth. The truth is Sri Krishna, the Eternal, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Amorous, the Beloved, the Fluter Lord with the peacock feathers in His crest.

¹ *Nada* is what has been imperfectly described as 'the music of the spheres,' the ceaseless sound out of which all this has come, which yogis can hear when they have attained an advanced stage of spirituality.

Brahman is the effulgence of the Person Divine, and *Paramatma* is but an aspect of the Lord. The gods and the *asuras*, the powers of good and evil, the forces of Nature, and all beings from the highest to the lowest in the order of creation are subservient to His will and execute the purposes of the Supernal Lord, Who manifests Himself fully in the *lilas*, in Goloka, eternally; in Vrindavan, here below in the Dvaparayuga in the eternal circle of revelations in the countless millions of universes, as also in the hearts of the devotees, who have given themselves up entirely to the Lord and the Lord alone. To know Him as such is *Jnana*, to be united with Him is what is called Yoga, and to love Him and enter into tender relationship with Him is *Bhakti*. The Lord Himself comes down as Sri Chaitanya in Navadwip to teach us how to realize Him fully in our life. The Lord Himself gives us the *Yuga-dharma*, the religion of the age, which is *sankirtan*—the singing aloud of the blessed Name of the blessed Lord. It alone in this age can purify the sin-stained hearts of the fallen and the weak. It alone can give us peace and bliss that knows no end. This *sankirtan* is the best way and the most suitable to us in these days, because we have played into the hands of our senses so to speak, we are controlled and overmastered by these senses over which we have no control. *Sankirtan* helps us to make use of these senses to obtain mastery over them. It arrests all the senses at once—the tongue and vocal organs to sing aloud and taste the sweetness of the Name of the Lord, the auricular apparatus to hear the same at the same time, the senses of sight to visualize the blessed form of beauty and of grace, the sense of smell to be enraptured with the aromatic odour of the beauteous Lord, and the tactile sense to be overpowered with the actual contact of the Lord of love, felt in the course of the ecstatic communion in the midst of this High-pitched Divine service, the *sankirtan* of

the Lord. You sit down to meditate in the lonely chamber, you cannot hold your mind at rest, it flies, flies, this way and that, here there and everywhere. You think of a lot of things you meant to avoid at that time, and you give it up as hopeless to think of the Lord. You find it impossible to accomplish in this life. *Sankirtan* comes to your help, and then you find it possible to do what seemed impossible.

'Ecstatic trance is the highest and the best, for here is the Lord felt in all the sweetness and glory of perfect revelation. But this is the end, and meditation or *abhyasa*, (*nididhyasna*, *dhyana* or *smarana* as it is called) is the way leading to this end. Where meditation is not possible the *tadārtha-karmas*, the Godward-leading doings should be had recourse to, and they will put us in the right way. Where even this is not possible, the deed unselfishly done will serve to purify our souls and push us forward in the up-hill path of godliness and religion (*Bhagavad-gita* 12.8-11).

'The *sankirtan* has all these elements of Godward progress in all its stages, and so it is for all, the pigmies and the giants of spiritual culture, and all the rest. It purifies the heart, and sheds the balm on the smarts and wounds of life; it deals out blessings with an open hand; it gives us wisdom and the light of the Truth; it adds to the joys and lets us taste the nectar in each and every syllable of the Name of the Lord; it drowns us in ecstasy; it inundates our soul with pure joy divine.¹ Sing high the note—the note of the Lord—and be blessed my child, for so shall you be for ever and evermore.'

"With these words, he sang me the *sankirtan*, and I sang with him till I felt myself translated to the eternity of truth and love, in tender relationship bound to the eternal Lord of love and bliss profound; and when I recovered, I thought I

¹ "The *Shikshastaka*" or the eight prayers written by Sri Chaitanya.

knew the full significance of the text of the *Bhagavad-gita* (18.54):

'Being *Brahman*, the soul is calm and serene, free from sorrows and desires, sees the one and the same in all that breathes, and attains true devotion and love.'

"I thought I felt the fulfilment of the divine prophecy:

'By true devotion, it (the soul) knows Me truly, yes, fully and entirely as I am; and knowing Me as such, it then enters the eternity of the *lila* (*Bhagavad-gita* 18.55).'

"I knew what was to be known and felt what was to be felt. Then I surrendered to him saying, 'Gurudeva! Now be kind to me. Keep me near you for ever and ever, so that I may be blessed by serving your feet.'

"Gurudeva placed his foot over my head to bless me and said, 'My child! service means doing that which would make me happy. So you do that, which will make me happy. You know that in our country today the mushroom growth of so many pseudo-religions has almost totally eclipsed Mahaprabhu's pure religion of love. If you work to bring even a single person to the right path that will make me a thousand times happier than your direct service to me. If you preach Mahaprabhu's *prema-dharma* (the religion of Pure Love) by yourself setting an example, and deliver the *jivas* from bondage by distributing *nama-prema* (love for the Name of the Lord) among them, not only I, even Nityananda will be completely sold out to you for ever and ever. I pray to him that he may give you extraordinary *shakti* for the fulfilment of his mission.'

"With these words Sri Gurudeva embraced and kissed me. He kept me with him for three days and then asked me to go to Bengal. While taking leave of him I bowed down at his feet and asked when I could see him again. He smiled and said, 'You will be able to see me directly whenever you want.'

This gave me great satisfaction. I started on my journey. Staying on the way at Vrindavan for eight days and at Kashi for a day, I reached Navadwip.

"Since then at the behest of gurudeva I have been wandering about, singing *sankirtan* and spreading the gospel of Mahaprabhu, wherever the Lord is pleased to take me."

As soon as Babaji Mahashaya reached Navadwip clouds of sorrow and despondency that had gathered over the mental horizon of his beloved companions were dispelled and they began to dance and sing and embrace each other in joy and ecstasy, they had never experienced before.

CHAPTER 13

SANNYASA INITIATION

Though Barha Babaji Mahashaya was now so called, he was for the people of Navadwip the same old Rajen Babu. But the time had now come, when it became necessary for him to cast away the mantle of Rajen Babu and choose the garb of a Babaji or a Vaishnava *sannyasi*. Perhaps the necessity was created by the name Barha Babaji itself, for there must be conformity between the name and the form. Perhaps it arose on account of the evangelic mission he was asked to fulfil. He took *sannyasa* from Sri Gaurahari Das Babaji, an aged Vaishnava of about eighty-five and disciple of Sri Jagannath Das Babaji, who was respected in Navadwip as a *siddha-mahapurusha*. Gaurahari Das Babaji gave him the name Sri Radharamana Charan Das. He was happy to have a disciple like him and showered all his affection upon him.

MEETING CHAITANYA DAS

One day, when Sri Radharamana Charan Das had gone to the Temple of Mahaprabhu in Navadwip, he saw a handsome boy about twenty years old, weeping before Mahaprabhu and saying, "You brought me out of home, out of hell to take me to the paradise, where love, peace and happiness reign supreme and showed me in a dream the great *mahapurusha*,

who would carry me there. But where, O where is that *mahapurusha* to be found—the life of my life, the soul of my soul? How can I live without him anymore?”

But as he wiped his tears and turned round he saw Barha Babaji Mahashaya standing behind. He was stunned for a while. But the next moment he fell at his feet and began to weep. Babaji Mahashaya lifted him up and gave him a loving embrace. The boy said, “Baba! yesterday I was lying under a tree near Shantipur. I was in great distress, because I was not able to find a guru and was praying to Mahaprabhu. Towards the end of night I had a dream in which Mahaprabhu came to me and said, ‘Be calm my boy. You will find your guru, when you come to my temple tomorrow.’ He also gave me an idea of the features of his face and the form of his body and said that he was known in Navadwip as Rajen Babu. I am sure you are that *mahapurusha*. Now have mercy on me and accept me as your servant by giving me *mantra*.”

Babaji Mahashaya said, “Is your name Chaitanya Das? Do you live in the Kacharh district? Mahaprabhu is extremely kind to you,” indicating thereby that Mahaprabhu had already bidden him about his initiation and he immediately gave him the *mantra*.

THE FESTIVAL OF DOGS

One day when Babaji Mahashaya was returning from Mahaprabhu's Temple performing *kirtan* with his party, a bitch came and joined the procession on the way. The *sankirtan*-party stopped at places and sang and then proceeded with redoubled vigour, singing the *sankirtan* with maddening peals. Every time the party stopped the bitch would pause till the party passed by and then she would roll and toss on the ground just as a devotee would do to bless his soul. She went

on doing this, and followed the party to their destination; and then she found it in her heart to stay with them at their place. They called her Bhakti Ma (Mother Devotion), for she was no ordinary dog—she was never found falling out with the rest of her species as other dogs would, but always keeping company with the devotees and regularly attending the *sankirtan* at home and abroad wherever it was held.

Days went on, and Bhakti Ma was taken ill. She was wasting away day by day till one day it was felt she was going to shuffle off her mortal coil, and so the *sankirtan* was held in her hearing to pour down the Lord's blessings on her departing soul. So she passed away with the Lord's Name on her ears, and her body was thrown into the sacred stream of the Ganges—a departure, to be envied by saints with hopes of salvation in after life.

The Chira Mahotsava was duly performed, as usual after the departure of a devotee, on the fourth day after her demise, and Babaji Mahashaya thought of giving an entertainment-service to the Vaishnavas for blessing her soul in the Land of Bliss.

This entertainment was accordingly held on the fourteenth day after her departure. Babaji Mahashaya said that some of her kin must be fed to complete the ceremony in the proper way. His attendants were struck dumb with surprise to hear this strange proposal from the lips of our Barha Babaji. For, whoever heard that dogs could be formally invited to dinner and made to act accordingly?

But there was one—our old friend Navadwip Das Babaji—who had the nerve to believe in everything that fell from Babaji's lips. He started up and said, "Well then, please let me know what I must do to see it done?" Babaji Mahashaya said, "Why, it is so simple. You should only prostrate yourself whenever you meet any of the dogs in the street and tell them

with folded hands, 'we humbly solicit the favour of your company along with your friends and relatives at the dinner service, to be held tomorrow in memory of our late lamented Bhakti Ma, at the premises of our gurudeva in the Barhal Ghat quarter of the city,' and so it shall be done."

Now, this is the usual form of invitation letters addressed to our human guests on such occasions, and we may readily guess at the incredible impropriety of this address to be delivered to dogs for similar purposes and the heavy responsibility of the man appointed to shoulder this mighty task. Navadwip was only too keenly conscious of the charge laid to his care, and he fell at his Babaji's feet with tears in his eyes. He felt that it was something which he could never hope to accomplish by himself unaided by the mysterious powers on high, and Babaji Mahashaya slapped him on the back and let him go.

Navadwip was surcharged—he staggered—he reeled and tottered from side to side as he walked and one would have taken him for a drunkard or a madcap who met him in the way. But on close scrutiny one might have seen that he was absorbed—the figure of a saint of power to work miracles at his own sweet will.

And so he went and took a round in the city, acting up to the biddings of his master, till it was night-fall, when he returned back to his lodging.

Next morning, preparations were going on for the proposed entertainment and Vaishnavas were summoned to join the festival, when news arrived that some of the leading Vaishnavas came to think that their prestige would be at stake if they would go and join a festival, where dogs were some of the invited guests. Barha Babaji went personally to the Barha Akhrah to settle the affair, but to no purpose. Some of them were inexorable, but the festival was held in spite of their stout resistance, and thousand others came to witness the strange performance.

Some of these guests had a shrewd suspicion that it would end in a farce after all, for evidently it was something impossible, which could never be brought about. Others had great confidence in the Babaji, and thought he could make impossible possible when he had a mind to do it. Then came Radheshyama Baba and all stood up and prostrated themselves before this worshipful personage. He was affectionately disposed towards Babaji Mahashaya, and he began to take him to task for setting his hands to a task which could not on the face of it be accomplished at all. He also urged that he would be sorely aggrieved if the proposed entertainment of dogs would prove a failure, for he could not brook to hear Babaji Mahashaya belittled by anybody, although our Babaji himself might not take it to heart and laugh it away.

Babaji Mahashaya argued that God—they all agree to affirm—was omnipresent, present in dogs as well as in men, and so appeals made to God in the dogs must necessarily have the same effect as those made to God inherent in men. He prayed them to remember that God came out of a pillar and manifested Himself as Narasinha, when Prahlada appealed to Him to show Himself to his demon father Hiranyakashipu. So, as it is true that God is in all beings, by the same truth shall the dogs come and take their share in the proceedings of the day. He concluded by saying that it was their want of faith in the Lord that made them suspect the practicability of the whole thing. The day wore on, and the assembly were just hoping to see their skeptical prophecies fulfilled, when behold! the dogs actually began to appear, one by one. Barha Babaji Mahashaya saw this, he started to his feet at once, he prostrated himself before his canine guests, and duly received them as he showed them to their seats on the royal road at the Barhal Ghat. There was great sensation amongst the people, and they gazed on one another in dumb surprise. The news

spread, and thousand others came to witness the strange performance. O wonder! Is it possible that dogs would accept human invitation and come as guests in response to our human appeals! May be, they are come, only in expectation of the bits and crumbs thrown away on such occasions. But no, not one, two or four of them for the matter of that—they come in crowds, some fifty to sixty of them have already appeared on the scene! And what was more wonderful—dogs would quarrel, we know, they would fly at each other's face whenever two dogs would meet—but no, these dogs came and sat down quietly side by side, as we men should do in our entertainment halls! It was something phenomenal indeed and men stood on both sides of the public road to notice the strange proceedings of the unheard of affair.

Babaji Mahashaya was transported beyond measure to find that his God sent His grace to show to the skeptical multitude what true faith could do even at the present age in the teeth of the gigantic disbelief so foolishly entertained in the Spirit and Spiritual truths. His eyes reddened with emotion as he threw the skirts of his clothes round his neck, and humbly beseeched his God in the dogs to issue orders for the dinner to be served. At this, all the dogs looked up to him at once, and he knew what they said, after which he instructed his men to supply his guests with the plantain-leaves, and serve them up with all the items of the entertainment rolled into a mass for their acceptance.

So, it was done, his biddings performed, the dogs were severally served with boluses on their leaf-plates on the royal road. Now, look here, wonder again! Dogs with edible matter before them, and they would not touch, they would not partake of food supplied to them! All the leaves were served one by one, and they sat upright, when Babaji Mahashaya spoke in a broken voice and with tears in his eyes, requesting

them to begin. At this time, a black dog came and sniffed at the leaves after which the dogs fell to their leaves.

Cries of "*Hari! Hari!*" and "*Ulu! Ulu!*" were heard on all sides around and they verily seemed to rend the skies above. It was a scene of scenes enacted before the wondering multitude, and their exclamations and roars of applause echoed and re-echoed in all quarters of the city.

The service ended, the dogs turned away from the leaves, and then an earthen pot filled with water was offered to each of them. They drank of the pots and sat still—bits were taken as *mahaprasada* from their leaves and water in a pot as a wash from off their feet—for they were Vaishnavas indeed, and no ordinary dogs, nay, they were God Himself invoked and incarnated by the power of the mighty faith in the Omnipresence of God—and then Babaji Mahashaya again folded his hands and prostrated himself before them, asking them if they were satisfied, and requesting them to pardon any shortcomings on the part of his attendants and retire to their own places at their own sweet will. The dog-Vaishnavas then left the scene, one by one as they came, and Babaji Mahashaya in a paroxysm of transcendental joy rolled and tossed on the blessed leaves from one side to another again and again. The men scrambled for a morsel of the *mahaprasada*, and our Radhashyama Baba embraced him heartily as he blessed his darling with tearful eyes before he took leave to repair to his lodgings.

Babaji Mahashaya gathered the *mahaprasada* all in a lump, offered it to the departed spirit of Bhakti Ma and then partook of it in high glee along with his attendants in the Ashram.

It was about ten o'clock in the night, when it was perceived that a plateful of *prasada* was lying unnoticed, and Babaji Mahashaya coming to know this, asked his men to

keep it intact, for it struck him one of his guests was yet to come and it was to be set apart for him in case he would turn up in the night.

After a while Babaji Mahashaya was coming out of his bed-chamber when he found a red dog lying at the door of his room. The dog saw him and got up atonce, and cast significant glances as it looked up to him. He called Chaitanya, his mate in charge of the *prasada*, and asked him to serve *prasada* up to the guest atonce. Chaitanya acted up to it, and Navadwip Das now coming up and looking at the newcomer exclaimed that verily it was the same dog he met first of all and the same whom he requested to convey the message to each and every one of the kinsfolk and bring them all to the scene of occurrence. So now, they all saw why this particular guest was late, for he had to go about and send them up, before he himself could come to take his share of the entertainment.

Now, to whom is the credit due? Whose glory should we sing? Bhakti Ma or Babaji Mahashaya? The dog-Vaishnavas or Navadwip Das, whose fervent appeals brought them to the scene? Or God Himself and faith in God, which is at the root of this grand performance? Yes, of course, it is faith, and faith in God, which is to be cherished above everything else—faith, which would open fresh vistas for human understanding to comprehend the High God and His higher laws, whose operations would pass for miracles in the eyes of men—yes, faith, which is the source of all power and love and joy to which we are all entitled as children of immortal bliss—and faith, which would dispel all ignorance and bring us face to face with God, and Sweetness and Light and the Spirit of Love which is in Him and Him alone.

We would have more instances to show that this faith in our Babaji Mahashaya enabled him to cure many diseases, nay to stop great epidemics like the plague in Calcutta and

cholera at Puri for the matter of that, and even invested him with the power of bringing men back from the horrid jaws of death to live in this world again. Such instances were only too frequent in the life-history of this great man. We would not enter here into these details, for the final triumph of faith lies not in these petty miracles to overpower the feeble mentality of the world-wise busybodies of the work-a-day world, but in the fact that faith alone can bring to us all that we are hankering after in life. Faith alone can give us our Lord of Love, Who is the One Eternal Fountain of Bliss Profound, and we think we have seen enough of our Babaji Mahashaya by this time to get at this truth of truths to guide our destinies in the journey of life. May we all cherish this faith in the Lord in our heart of hearts, and may we all bask in the moony sunshine at the feet of our Lord of Love.

CHAPTER 14

SANKIRTAN IN KRISHNANAGARA

Devendranath Chakravarti, who was better known as 'Jai Nitai' in Navadwip had brotherly affection for Barha Babaji Mahashaya. One day he came to him and said, "Dada (brother), let us go to Krishnanagara one day." Babaji Mahashaya said, "Yes, let us go tomorrow."

So the next day Babaji Mahashaya and his party started for Krishnanagara early in the morning. Dancing and singing *sankirtan* all the way they reached the outskirts of Krishnanagara at 9 a.m. Hiralal Babu, the local police inspector was attracted by their *kirtan*. He asked them:

"Where are you going?"

"We are going to Krishnanagara" replied Devendra Babu.

"Where will you stay?"

"We do not know. May be the Lord has arranged for our stay somewhere."

"I would request that you rest for a while in the garden of Sri Kantha Babu on the bank of the River Kharhe, and have *prasada* before you proceed to the town."

They agreed. Hiralal Babu made adequate arrangements for the *prasada* of about twenty or twenty-five people. Soon news spread in Krishnanagara that a *mahapurusha* had come and was staying in the garden-house of Sri Kantha Babu. People started coming to him for *darshan*.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Babaji Mahashaya set out with his party dancing and singing the Name of the Lord as usual. Soon they reached near the college of Krishnanagara. The college had just closed. The teachers and the students were coming out of the college premises. The melody of the *sankirtan* rang in their ears. As they turned in that direction they saw a tall and impressive looking Babaji and his party dancing and singing in ecstasy. Tears incessantly streamed out of the eyes of the tall Babaji. His hair stood on end and he trembled like one caught in a blast of emotion, which it was difficult to control. He was singing and inviting others to sing. He sang:

*"Sing, O sing the Lord's Name
They are but one—the Lord and the Name
The Lord's Name is so sweet, sweet!
I pray, I bow down at your feet,
Sing, O sing the Lord's Name;
The Name will bless you with Krishna-prema."*

Adhar Babu, the professor of the college, and Vrajala Babu, the teacher of the collegiate school, found the invitation irresistible. They joined the *sankirtan* party and began to sing and dance with them. The students also felt forcibly drawn and began to sing and dance. The call was also heard by the shopkeepers, who came down from their shops to join the *sankirtan* and the passersby—the wood-cutter with the load of wood over his head and the washerman with his load of clothes all came and joined to create a gala of *sankirtan*, such as the people of Krishnanagara had never seen before.

Babaji Mahashaya was so lost in ecstatic joy and emotion that he occasionally felt like losing outer consciousness and falling senseless on the ground, but he controlled himself by shouting 'Nitai! Nitai! His shouts seemed to rend the sky.

Others also caught his emotion and were so transported that they sang and danced like those who had drunk deep of the cup of a divine drink.

The procession marched on and on, and as it marched it swelled in numbers. Slowly night came in and Babaji Mahashaya stopped *sankirtan* and returned to the garden. He and his companions took *prasada*, which Hiralal Babu had kept ready and retired to rest.

The next morning came Jogesh Babu, the local sub-registrar. He said to Babaji Mahashaya, "I shall be obliged if you and your party take *prasada* at my place this morning, and after resting for some time start for *nagara-kirtana*¹ from there." Babaji Mahashaya agreed. Jogesh Babu went back and told his mother and sister, "I have invited a *mahapurusha* for *prasada* today. Twelve or fourteen other *sadhus* will also come with him. Prepare the *bhoga* with care and piety." Jogesh Babu's sister exclaimed, "Ma! I saw in a dream this morning that a tall *mahapurusha* came to me and said, 'Didi! (sister) I am very hungry. Give me something to eat.' I gave him *asana*² to sit and then my sleep was broken. May be, he is the same *mahapurusha*. But whosoever he may be we shall take care to prepare the *bhoga* with piety."

At about 12 o' clock Babaji Mahashaya came singing and dancing along with his party. He continued the *kirtan* for some time. As soon as the *kirtan* was over he said to Jogesh Babu's sister, "Didi! I am very hungry. Give me something to eat. Where is Ma?" Jogesh Babu's sister was stunned. She went and told her mother, "Ma! my dream has come true. The *mahapurusha* I saw in the dream was exactly like him and he asked me for something to eat in exactly the same strain. Surely, he must be a *mahapurusha*."

¹ The performance of *sankirtan* through the village.

² A carpet or mat to sit on.

Ma said, "Yes, Jogesh also says that it appears from his face and figure and *bhava* that he is a *mahapurusha*. His very sight induces *bhakti*."

Very soon *bhoga* was offered to the deity and served. After taking *prasada* Babaji and his companions rested for some time. At about 3:30 in the afternoon they started for *nagara-kirtan*. Nobody was invited for *kirtan*, but many people had already gathered at the house of Jogesh Babu and many were coming dancing and singing. Babaji Mahashaya was by now very well known and highly respected by almost everybody in Krishnanagara. So most of the important persons of the town also came and joined the *kirtan* procession. They all sang and danced and clapped their hands in a state of spiritual frenzy evoked by the sight of Babaji Mahashaya dancing and singing in a half-conscious state with tears streaming out of his eyes and all the other *sattvika-bhavas* manifesting themselves on his body. In that state he extended his arms and clasped close to his heart anyone, who came to join the procession, whether Hindu or Muslim, rich or poor, young or old, thus charging him, as it were, with the divine current of *bhakti*, he had never experienced before, and he was also caught by the frenzy and began to sing and dance like others. The procession went round the city and returned to Jogesh Babu's house at about 9 p.m. Jogesh Babu's mother had kept the *prasada* ready. Babaji Mahashaya and his companions took *prasada* and returned to Sri Kantha Babu's garden-house singing and dancing.

THE AMAZING HARILOOT¹

Days rolled on like this. Every day *sankirtan* procession

¹ It is customary to scatter some sweet after *sankirtan*, which people pick up and eat as *prasada*. This is called *Hariloot*.

went round Krishnanagara and every day people were carried away by the flow-tide of spiritual frenzy generated by the *sankirtan* into a land of transcendental bliss, they had never known or experienced before. One day as the procession was marching through a new route, Bhuvana Mohana, a devotee, was saying to his friends, "Everybody in Krishnanagara now regards Barha Babaji as truly a Barha Babaji, a great Babaji or a *mahapurusha*. Here he is coming, singing and dancing in *sankirtan*. If he leads the *sankirtan* into my house, I would know that he is really a *mahapurusha*." As he said this he saw that the *sankirtan* procession had taken a new turn and was entering the lane in which Bhuvana Mohana Babu's house was situated. Bhuvana Mohana came forward and bowed down to the procession. Babaji Mahashaya clasped him in his arms and entered his house singing and dancing. In the middle of the courtyard of the house there was a *tulasi* plant on a raised platform. Babaji Mahashaya and his party started going round and round the plant dancing and singing. Crowds of other people entered the house and joined them.

At this time Bhuvana Mohana Babu brought some *batasha*¹ in a *shal-patra*² and gave it to Babaji Mahashaya for *hariloot*. Baba took the *shal-patra* in his hand and began to sing the song usually sung at the time of *hariloot*. The purport of the song was as follows:

"Come, come one and all and loot, Nitai is squandering the nectar of divine love in the form of *batasha*.

He is pouring from a pitcher containing the nectar.

The more he pours the more the nectar swells.

And the pitcher always remains full up to the brim."

¹ A dry sweet prepared from sugar.

² Leaf of a timber-plant.

Baba held the *shal-patra* plate in his left hand and he was dancing with his right hand lifted upwards as he sang. All others were dancing and singing with him. He occasionally scattered *batashas* with his right hand and shouted 'Haribol!' People fell upon the *batashas*, collected and ate them. There were many people standing outside, because the courtyard was packed to every inch. They were sorry that they could not participate in the *hariloot*. For their sake Baba came out and began to scatter *batashas* all round. The loot accompanied by dance and *kirtan* went on for an hour, during which everybody was transported into ecstasy. But the people were surprised to see that although Babaji Mahashaya was freely and repeatedly throwing a handful of *batashas*, the *shal-patra* plate in his hand always remained full up to the brim. Suddenly Baba became aware of this and threw away the plate for fear of fame.

After this Babaji Mahashaya renewed his onward march singing and dancing as before. Slowly it became dark, but the *sankirtan*-party continued to swell in numbers. More and more people came with lanterns and torches and joined the *sankirtan*. No one knew where and in which direction they were going. Only Babaji knew and he was leading the procession like one who was well acquainted with all the lanes and by-lanes of the town, although he had never been there before. He marched on and on, dancing and singing and returned to the garden-house through a route different from the one through which he had gone.

THE AMAZING FOOT-PRINTS

The next morning Jogesh Babu came and said, "Baba! my mother desires that you should all take *prasada* at my place today and instead of going out for *nagara-kirtan* in the afternoon perform *kirtan* at my house."

Baba said, "So let the mother's desire be fulfilled." At about 11 a.m. he reached Jogesh Babu's house singing and dancing along with his companions. After resting there for a while they sat down for *prasada*. While they were eating, Jogesh Babu's sister said, "Baba! people say that you are a *mahapurusha*, but I have not yet seen anything extraordinary in you."

Babaji Mahashaya said, "I am an ordinary person. There is nothing extraordinary in me. But if you want to see something extraordinary, pray to Gaura-Nitai. If They want, They can show you something"

Jogesh Babu's mother said, "Baba! you may be a *mahapurusha* or a god, I do not know how I have developed motherly affection towards you and love to treat you as I treat Jogesh."

Babaji Mahashaya replied, "Ma! this *bhava* is very sweet and I pray that it remains constant."

In the afternoon many people started coming to the house of Jogesh Babu. *Sankirtan* began at about 4 p.m. Babaji Mahashaya was dancing and singing, describing the *sankirtan* scene of Lord Gauranga dancing in ecstasy in the midst of his devotees. He was stressing the point that the Name of the Lord was the only way and Nityananda the only guide to that beatific realization, when suddenly he cried:

"Lo! there is Nitai entranced, behold,
Men high and low caught in His loving hold!"

He said this and was lost to the world. Tears streamed forth, hair stood on end, and trembling like a plant caught in a blast, he fell in a trance upon the ground. His followers surrounded him and sang the Name of the Lord till at last he regained consciousness and cried in a husky voice:

“Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Pabe Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.”¹

All others repeated in the same strain, and so on, till it was about ten o'clock in the night when the party divided itself as a dual throng, singing the *kirtan* by halves, one group singing ‘Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Pabe Radhe-Shyama,’ the other singing ‘Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama,’ and vying with each other at the top of their voice in a celestial combat.

But where was our Babaji Mahashaya gone? Lo, there he stood, leaning against the wall with eyes half-closed and a radiant smile upon his face, bathed in tears, swinging from side to side in a transport of delight and raising the forefinger of his right hand, as if pointing out something on high near by. Delicious scents came floating in the air they knew not from where, and supernatural joys were felt by those who took part in the *sankirtan*.

It was about midnight when the *sankirtan* was brought to a close, and the devotees came up to the spot where our Babaji stood to bow down to him and take the dust of his feet. There they found to their amazement, a pair of foot-prints clearly stamped upon the marble slab on the floor and a pool of water formed of tears and sweat collected in the depression marked on the slab.

This circumstance naturally created a sensation among the people of the neighbourhood and they came in crowds to ascertain the truth and pay homage to the saint. Babaji Mahashaya of course tried to make light of the affair. But Devendra Babu came and said, “Dada! It is true, the foot-prints are there. I have seen them with my own eyes.” Babaji replied, “May be, I do not know. But this must be due to the

¹ (Please turn to page 159)

lila of Nitai or the *shakti* of the Name. It is not fair to attribute it to any particular person."

But this does not always happen when the Name of the Lord is sung. The fact is that just as a piece of glass reflects light if it is pure and transparent, and the more transparent and powerful it is, the more light it reflects, in the same way, a man with a pure heart who is spiritually advanced, reflects the power of the Name, and the more advanced he is the more the power of the Name is reflected through him.

Babaji Mahashaya did not only leave his foot-prints on the floor of Jogesh Babu's house, he left indelible prints of his image as a great saint on the hearts of the people of Krishnanagara. He had now lived in Krishnanagara for a month and a half. The people had begun to feel that he was their Messiah, who had come from above to deliver them from the bondage of *Maya* and its never ending trials and tribulations. They always talked about his ecstatic dance, heart-melting *kirtans*, sweet words and above all his affection, which flowed from his heart naturally and freely for rich and poor, young and old and Brahmins and *Sudras* alike. To the various subjects of their talk about him was now added the mysterious phenomenon of the foot-prints, which attracted crowds of people everyday to the house of Jogesh Babu.

Babaji Mahashaya, who by nature shunned name and fame, now began to think of leaving Krishnanagara. Devendra Babu said, "Dada! It will be difficult to take leave of the people of Krishnanagar. So let us go to Diknagara without letting them know. Baba agreed. The next day he started with his companions, dancing and singing:

"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."

People thought that he was out for *nagara-kirtan* as usual. They accompanied him, but when they saw him marching on and on towards Diknagara, they understood that he was leaving Krishnanagara. They were suddenly struck with sorrow

(From page 157)

¹ This *sankirtan* song came to Babaji Mahashaya in the state of trance. It became his favourite song afterwards, because it contains in a nutshell the fundamental teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—the End as well as the means. The first line describes the End, and the second the means to achieve it. The End is the realization of Nitai-Gaura, Radha-Shyama and Their loving service. The means through which the End may be realized is the ‘Hare Krishna’ *mahamantra*. ‘*Bhaja*’ means to meditate or adore, ‘*Pabe*’ means ‘will achieve,’ ‘*Japa*’ means repeating the *mantra* and counting the repetitions over the beads of a rosary. Both *bhaja* and *japa* are mandatory. The guru commands the disciple to meditate on Nitai, Gaura, Radha and Shyama (Krishna) and simultaneously repeat the *mahamantra*, because meditation is fruitful only when accompanied by *japa* (Sri Jiva Goswami’s commentary on Bh.11.5)

The order in which the names occur after ‘*Bhaja*’ is significant. ‘*Bhaja*’ evokes the image of guru asking the disciple to meditate on Nitai, Gaura, Radha and Shyama. The invocation of the guru is necessary before the beginning of the meditation to make it fruitful. By the mercy of the guru the *sadhaka*, attains the lotus feet of Nitai, because Nitai is the *guru-tattva* (the guru-principle) and the *sadhaka*’s guru is one of His *prakashas* or manifestations. The realization of Nityananda leads to the realization of Gauranga and the realization of Gauranga to the realization of Radha-Krishna, as the word ‘*Pabe*’ indicates.

There is however, some misunderstanding in regard to this *kirtan* inaugurated by Sri Radharamana Charana Das Babaji, which we shall do well to remove. It is sometimes supposed that it is a substitute for the ‘Hare Krishna’ *mahamantra*, because some people chant this instead of the *mahamantra* during *sankirtan*, that is, in *kirtan* performed by a number of people together to the accompaniment of *mridanga*, *karatala* and other instruments. But that it is not a substitute for the *mahamantra* is clear from the second line of the *kirtan* itself, which enjoins that during *japa* one should chant the ‘Hare Krishna’ *mahamantra*, and from the fact that those who chant these lines during *sankirtan* repeat only the *mahamantra* while doing

and disappointment. Still they continued to march with him. He, however, persuaded them with sweet words to return home. They returned but like persons who felt that they were lifeless after their soul was gone.

japa. They do not chant the *mahamantra* during *sankirtan*, because they say that there is no record that Mahaprabhu Himself did it. In the first *sankirtan* procession, which Mahaprabhu led to the house of Chand Kazi, there were seven different groups performing *sankirtan*, as shown in *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, and in each group a different *kirtan* song was sung. No group sang the *mahamantra*. In His travels in South India also Mahaprabhu is represented as chanting songs like: 'Rama Raghava, Rama Raghava, Rama Raghava Rakshamanam' and not the *mahamantra*. Besides this, in His precepts to the devotees He prescribed the repetition of the *mahamantra* in *japa* and the singing of other *sankirtan* songs like: 'Haraye namah Krishna Yadhavaya namah, Gopal Govinda Rama Sri Madhusudana' during *sankirtan* (C. Bh. 2.23.79-80).

The reason why He did not prescribe the chanting of the *mahamantra* during *sankirtan* may have been that He regarded the 'counting' during chanting the *mahamantra* as obligatory. He said that there was no rule regarding the chanting of *mahamantra*, except that it must be counted (C.Bh. 2.23.77-78). In the *Hari Bhakti Vilasa* it is stated that *japa* without counting does not bear fruit (HBV. 17.60) The counting on beads during the performance of *sankirtan* is impracticable or cumbersome, because during *sankirtan* people usually dance or play on musical instruments while singing.

In the case of Barha Babaji Mahashaya, however, we find in *Charit Sudha*, his biography in six volumes written in Bengali, that at least on two occasions he asked his disciples to chant 'Hare Krishna' *mahamantra* during *sankirtan* and he himself sat down to count—probably only to show that he was not against the chanting of *mahamantra* in *sankirtan*, if someone counted the repetitions. He usually chanted 'Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama,' in *sankirtan*, because it did not require counting, also because Nitai-Gaura are most merciful. The only purpose of Their appearance is to deliver the weak and fallen souls of this age of Kali and in so doing They do not take into account their offenses (Cc. 1.8.25-28).

Most people, however, chant the 'Hare Krishna' *mahamantra* in *sankirtan* without counting in the absence of an explicit mandate against it. It is true that neither Mahaprabhu nor the *shastras* have issued a clear injunction against the chanting of *mahamantra* in *sankirtan* without counting.

CHAPTER 15

THE DANCING TREE

When Babaji Mahashaya reached Diknagara he heard men complaining about an unhappy event, which had recently occurred in the locality. There was an old banyan tree, and some Mohammedans had taken it into their head to chop off some of its branches for some reason or another. The Hindus regarded the tree as sacred, and they were sorely aggrieved at the unsympathetic attitude of their Muslim brethren.

Next morning, Babaji Mahashaya set out with his train, as was his wont, dancing and singing the Name of the Lord. The villagers came in crowds and joined them on the way, and he led them straight to the banyan tree. There he marked the mischief that was done, passed round and round and prostrated himself before the tree, and then marched asinging to the Mohammedan quarter of the town. He went his way, as if perfectly familiar with the lanes and by-lanes of the entire neighbourhood, and they soon found themselves in the residence of Haradhan Mandal, a Mohammedan gentleman, who enjoyed local reputation and had considerable influence over the Muslims of the place. The villagers of course feared a row, and they thought of desisting the *sankirtan*-party from venturing into the quarter, but they could do nothing. There they were, in the courtyard of Haradhan Mandal, and when he

appeared, the band of singers like trained soldiers surrounded him on all sides and went on singing and dancing, oblivious of the world and anything else besides.

Suddenly, Babaji Mahashaya addressed himself to Haradhan and roared:

"Say, '*Nitai-Gaura Radha-Shyama!*'"

Haradhan repeated, "Say, '*Nitai-Gaura Radha-Shyama!*'"

Babaji said again, "Say, '*Hare Krishna Hare Rama!*'"

Haradhan again repeated, "Say, '*Hare Krishna Hare Rama!*'" and so on for some fifteen minutes, Haradhan repeating what Babaji suggested, till tears streamed down the cheeks and the flowing beard of Mandal Sahib, and he began to dance—hands with the rosary of pebbles raised on high, and wooden sandals under his feet; and when Babaji Mahashaya came forward and clasped him to his chest, he was overpowered with joy and came down reeling to the ground beneath. The *sankirtan* closed round, and Babaji breathed into his ears, and he trembled and rolled on the ground; and then, blanched with dust, he began to dance with renewed vigour in the midst of *sankirtan*. Off went his sandals he knew not where, the rosary slipped between his fingers he did not perceive, he fixed his eyes on the Babaji, muttered in broken accents, and went on with his dance; and when our Babaji left the scene and made for the Banyan tree, he made one of the party and followed him, hardly knowing what he was doing and where he was going and why.

Now, this is hypnotism, one would say. May be, but our Babaji was not a trained hypnotist for aught we know. The fact is, that these powers come, without any seeking—yes, they come to the man of Love—the power of raising any man and every man to the Kingdom of Heavenly Bliss, where all these petty dissensions are lulled into the harmony and repose of love and joy.

So they came back to the banyan, and went dancing and singing round and round the banyan tree; when lo! what is this!—the very branches of the tree seemed to dance in tune with the *sankirtan* beneath. Can this be true?—They could scarcely believe their eyes. They cleared their looks and looked again, but only to see what they saw before. The branches were indeed dancing—the branches just above the *sankirtan* below. At first they thought there might have been some birds flapping their wings and moving the branches. But they had soon to give up this idea, for they noticed with surprise that the branches danced only where the *sankirtan* was going on, and that other branches danced while the former ones stopped as the *sankirtan* moved round and round. Rumour flew apace, and men and women came in crowds to witness the strange performance. The *sankirtan* continued till eleven o'clock in the morning, after which, when Babaji Mahashaya was about to retire, our friend Haradhan requested him with tears in his eyes to be permitted to stay with him. Our Babaji consoled him saying that he need not fear, for the grace of God was upon him, only he should see that the tree might not be defiled again in time to come. He gave the banyan the name of the 'Wish-tree,' and said that whoever would offer milk, Ganges-water and *chirag*¹ in the evening at the feet of the tree, should have the fulfilment of his desires. Haradhan pledged himself and his family to the sacred vow, whereupon our Babaji embraced him heartily, and bidding him good-bye, returned with his *sankirtan* back to his lodgings.

But things like this cannot be readily swallowed by men of the present age, and there came censors and the connoisseurs—the educated and scientifically inclined men of the

¹ Lamp, made of a small earthen pot with oil and wicks.

neighbourhood, who still doubted the testimony of the eye-witnesses on the scene. They had their honest doubts, and it was well that it was so, for these 'honest doubts' act as the cement of conviction, when careful experiment removes these doubts and reveals the truth.

It was not long before Babaji Mahashaya heard all this, and he wished to show them that truth like gold shines brighter when put to the proof. Personal aspersions he would never mind—we have already seen so much of him in the earlier pages—but when any one of the verities (we have mentioned before) was called in question, he would at once take up the challenge and prove it to the hilt that such doubts only arise out of the ignorance of the higher laws, that work inspite of the arrogant and adverse allegations of the short-sighted coxcombs and bigoted scientists.

Said the Babaji in solemn accents, "I say, gentlemen, the Name of the Lord is Omnipotent; it is such a trifling thing to be accomplished by His Name—this dancing of the stocks and stones. Come and see, if you still have doubts, join the *sankirtan*, and you shall have ample opportunity of verifying the truth once again."

Next morning Babaji Mahashaya set out with his *sankirtan*-party, and those who were skeptically inclined accompanied him to the scene of occurrence. It was about half past nine in the morning when they reached the banyan, and the men found to their astonishment that the tree danced again as the Lord's Name was sung beneath the branches. They saw it, and yet they would not believe. One of them stepped forward and asked the Babaji if he had any objections to somebody climbing the tree for ascertaining the truth. He said he had none, provided no non-Brahmin should undertake the task. Two Brahmin boys were accordingly summoned to get up on the tree, with instructions to ransack the

branches and see if there was any bird or monkey or any other animal that might have been swinging the branches that seemed to dance to the tune of the *sankirtan*. But, they could find nothing, and so it was finally established beyond the shadow of a doubt, and universally accepted as a truth—this dancing of the branches of the tree. They naturally attributed it to the power of the saint—more so, when they looked at our Muslim friend Haradhan Mandal, the leader of the Mohammedans regarded with fear by their Hindu neighbours—this Mandal, who was come again and singing with tearful eyes along with the others in the *sankirtan*-party.

The same thing was repeated for seven consecutive days, and the branches danced whenever the Babaji sang with his party under the banyan tree.

One Radhika Babu approached Babaji Mahashaya and asked him respectfully to explain the mystery of the dancing tree.

Babaji Mahashaya said, "Vegetables have internal consciousness as well as the animals, and they are more or less sensible of pleasure and pain. The *shastras* say that the tree can see and taste as we men do, and we can demonstrate the truth by noticing that the tree evinces selective action as it takes in air, light, water and salts for its consumption and subsequent growth and development, and also that a creeper planted at a distance of five or six yards is always sure to surmount the obstacles and make its way to the neighbouring tree. Facts like these go to show that vegetables can see and they have their tastes and tendencies in common with the animals, with the difference that in the latter they are more clearly pronounced and more strongly manifest than in the former. But they are there, and so we should think twice before we carelessly harm these plants, for then we might be guilty of some such offense as cruelty to animals when we try to injure them.

"Our *shastras* go further and say that even men may sometimes, for some serious offense on their part, find themselves transformed into plants in the course of the future transmigration of their souls. This may sound rather strange, and men may be disinclined to accept it as truth, as the Theory of Evolution may have got a firm hold on their minds. But it is not the less true on that account, for if 'Evolution' is true, 'Involution' is also true, the one being necessarily implied in the other."

Then he proceeded to point out that the being in the tree was a saint, who came to be born as a tree for some serious offense (and there is a list of such offenses with like consequences recorded in the scriptures) committed in a previous life, and as such danced like a saint and a devotee when the Name of the Lord was heard. He then asked all present thence-forward to regard all beings with the love and respect due to them.

From Diknagara Babaji Mahashaya went to Bavla in Shantipura, the place where Advaitacharya Prabhu had performed his *sadhana*. The memory of Advaitacharya brought forth *sattvika-bhavas* and he fell senseless on the ground. On regaining consciousness he got up with a start and danced and sang in praise of Advaita Prabhu.

After passing the day in dance and *kirtan* in Shantipura the next morning Babaji Mahashaya went to the Temple of Vrindavan-Chandra in Guptiparha and performed dance and *kirtan* before the deities. From Guptiparha he started with his party for Satgachiya. The famous Vipina Bihari Goswami of Satgachiya was with him. Dancing and singing all the way they reached the Temple of Madana-Gopalaji in Satgachiya.

After dancing and singing in ecstasy for a long time before Madana-Gopalaji, they took *prasada* in the temple.

The *sevants* (priests) of the temple were very happy to have Babaji Mahashaya in their midst. On their insistence he had to stay there for a number of days, after which he took leave of them with great difficulty and started for Kalna, dancing and singing,

*"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."*

As soon as the sound of *sankirtan* was heard in Kalna, the people of the village began to come and dance and sing with him. There was no end to their happiness. Babaji Mahashaya was going ahead and they were following him. Nobody knew where they were going. Babaji Mahashaya was dancing in a peculiar style with one leg placed upon the other crosswise. The place was hilly, with so many ups and downs, but this did not make any difference to him. He was going swiftly and it appeared that not his feet, but only the two toes of each foot touched the ground. The followers found it difficult to keep pace with him. He was going like one, who was well acquainted with the lanes and by-lanes of the place, without pausing anywhere to look about or inquire from someone about the route.

This was his usual practice. He always reached the destination without making any inquiries, even if the place was new to him. If someone asked, "Are you acquainted with this place?" he replied, "If not I, Nitai is. Nitai and His Name are one. Nitai is always with us in the form of His Name. Is there any place in the universe which is not known to Nitai? Chanting the Name of Nitai you can go anywhere and you will always reach the destination. If the Name fails to take us to the place where we want to go in the material world, how shall we believe that it can take us to the eternal spiritual world of our Lord? You need have no doubt that the Name cannot only carry us where we want, there is nothing that the

Name cannot do for us—if only we have a pure mind and faith in it.

Babaji reached the temple where *vigrahas* of Gaura-Nitai, given by Gaura-Nitai Themselves to Their devotee Gauri Das Pandit, are worshipped even today. He danced and sang before Them for two hours. At about 11 o'clock the goswami of the temple came and said, "*Prasada* will soon be ready. You may all kindly take *prasada* here after you have bathed and attended to your morning service." There was no end to Baba's happiness on this, because he regarded it as the invitation from Nitai-Gaura Themselves.

After taking *prasada* and resting for some time Babaji Mahashaya and his party went out for *darshan* of various places in Kalna. When they reached the Temple of Namabrahma, where exists the *samadhi* (tomb) of Siddha Bhagavan Das Babaji, his foremost disciple Sri Vishnu Das Babaji accosted him as *bhratusputra* (nephew) and embraced him very lovingly. The reason why he thus addressed him was that the three great *siddha-purushas*, Sri Jagannath Das Babaji, Sri Chaitanya Das Babaji and Sri Bhagavan Das Babaji, loved one another like real brothers, although the mode of *upasana* or *bhajan* through which each had become *siddha* was different. They addressed one another as 'Dada' (brother). According to this relationship Gaurahari Das Babaji, the *sannyasa-guru* of Barha Babaji, who was a disciple of Sri Jagannath Das Babaji, was a nephew of Bhagavan Das Babaji.

Vishnu Das Babaji was very happy to meet Barha Babaji and insisted that he must stay with him in the Temple of Namabrahma for at least a month. Barha Babaji could not but accede to his request. He passed one month in the Temple of Namabrahma in dance and *kirtan* and in sweet conversation with Vishnu Das Babaji, after which he went to the village known as Gurap.

CHAPTER 16

NAVADWIP'S DEATH AND REVIVAL

In Gurap Baba Mahashaya danced and sang before the deities of Radha-Vallabha in the temple during the morning and evening, and the next morning he wanted to leave, but unfortunately all his companions were taken ill with malaria. The Goswami of the temple, who had already requested him to stay on in the temple for a few days, came and said, "Now you see! Radha-Vallabha also wants to enjoy your company for some time more. How can you leave, when everybody is ill?" So all of them had to stay on.

Towards the evening there came an astrologer and began to read everyone's hand. When he saw the hand of Navadwip Das Babaji, he was taken aback. He kept gazing at him for some time. Everyone thought that there was something extraordinary in the hand, which may be very auspicious or very inauspicious. They wanted him to declare what it was. He said, "I shall let you know about it in private." But Babaji Mahashaya said, "Why in private? In this world good and evil go together and everything happens at the will of the Lord. So, there is no harm if you say it before the person whom it concerns."

The astrologer said, "I do not know what I should say. As far as I can see the life term of this young man has come to an end. If there were any means by which he could be saved I

would have suggested, but his death is so sure that it cannot be prevented by any means."

Navadwip Das laughed and said, "I knew this already. The astrologer who made my horoscope at the time of my birth was most competent. He had predicted from my horoscope that I would die in the first half of the month of *pausha* in the year 1895. He had also predicted the disease of which I would die."

The astrologer said, "As far as I can see you should die of fever and cough."

Navadwip said, "Yes, that astrologer had also said the same. But there is nothing to worry about this. For me it would be a matter of the greatest pleasure if I die in such good company."

But it was a matter of the greatest concern for all others because Navadwip Das was their life and soul. They could hardly live without him. They believed that Babaji Mahashaya could save him, but he looked so indifferent. When they asked him about Navadwip's fate, he said, "What do I know? Nitai Chand knows what He wants to do. Whatever He does is always for our good. You need not get agitated, chant *Harinama*."

Navadwip's condition worsened. Both fever and cough went on increasing, till one day he became so weak that he was not able to speak. Babaji Mahashaya asked everyone to surround him and perform *kirtan*. Navadwip looked at Babaji Mahashaya for the last time and somehow folded his hands to bid him farewell. Babaji's eyes became wet. He shouted "*Jai Nitai! Jai Nitai!*" The next moment Navadwip breathed his last.

But Navadwip was not only the life and soul of every member of the party of Babaji Mahashaya, he was also the most beloved one of Babaji himself. How could he let him go?

He asked his companions to take him out of the room. They took him out. Babaji Mahashaya lifted him up and clasped him with both of his arms. Navadwip's head lay motionless on Babaji's left shoulder and his eyes were turned upwards. All others wept as they sang *kirtan* around him. The *kirtan* went on, and after some time Navadwip Das opened his eyes and lifted his head from the shoulder of Babaji Mahashaya looking all around. Then Babaji Mahashaya let him off and began to dance and say, "*Bol Nityananda bol, Nityananda bol!*" Others also shouted, "*Bol Nityananda bol, Nityananda bol!*" Once more Babaji Mahashaya tied Navadwip Das in his arms and let him off. The moment he let him off he also began to dance in ecstasy.

Dance and *kirtan* went on for some time. There was no end to everyone's happiness. When the *kirtan* was over Babaji Mahashaya said to Navadwip, "This time Nitai has given you a new lease of life. Go and roll in the dust where His *kirtan* was performed." Navadwip Das smiled and said, "I know, you can kill or revive at your will." He then began to roll in the dust. Rolling he went and sat near the feet of Barha Babaji Mahashaya after making obeisance to him. Others also made obeisance to him and sat down at his feet.

Gokula, a member of the party asked, "Baba! Is it possible to save a man after his term of life is over?"

"Why not" replied Baba. "When people run short of money and have nothing to eat, don't they borrow?"

"Money can be borrowed. But is it possible to borrow life?" Gokula asked again.

Baba said, "Everything is possible for Nitai. Leave aside the revival of a man who is dead, Nitai can make even a doll live and speak like men."

BABAJI MAHASHAYA'S FEVER

The same night Babaji Mahashaya was laid up with high

fever. The fever continued for three days unabated. During this period he neither took any medicine nor fasted. The *kaviraja* (Ayurvedic doctor), who had been treating the other members of the party said to him beseechingly, "Baba! If you do not take medicine and be careful in eating, the fever will not easily leave. You must in no case eat anything that would increase phlegm."

"Then what should I eat?" asked Baba.

"You can take barley with a little sugar-candy. I am leaving two pills of Mahalaksmivilasa and one pill of Jivarachintamani. Just now take Jivarachintamani with the juice of betel-leaf, ginger and honey. Then after a couple of hours take Mahalaksmivilasa with the juice of *tulasi* leaves and honey. In the evening again take Mahalaksmivilasa. Even then if the fever increases at night do not fail to inform me."

"Very well," said Babaji and bowed down to him with respect. The *kaviraja* also bowed down and left. The Goswamis of the Temple of Radha-Vallabha were filled with anxiety for Babaji on hearing what the *kaviraja* said.

After the *kaviraja* had gone Gokula asked Baba, "Should I prepare the medicine now?"

Baba said, "Fold the three pills in a piece of paper and put them under my pillow."

Gokula did likewise. The news regarding the fever of Babaji Mahashaya reached Calcutta. On getting the news, his disciple Jogendranath Misra, who lived in Calcutta, arrived in the temple at about 12 o'clock in the noon. He brought with him fruits, pickles, jam of various kinds, and preserved *ghee*, which is used as medicine. One of the Goswamis said to Baba, "Baba! These things will not be offered to Radha-Vallabha just now. We shall offer them when you recover and are in a position to take the *prasada*." Baba said like a good

and obedient patient, "No, no Baba! Is it possible to eat these things now?"

After the *bhoga* was offered to Radha-Vallabha Baba said to Gokula, "Get me some *mahaprasada*." Gokula hesitated, but on Baba's request he went and brought the *mahaprasada*. Baba took the *prasada* and slept. In the afternoon he said to Gokula, "Every day at night at the time of *nikunja-bhoga* you offer to Thakura¹ all the different kinds of fruit Jogesh has brought." Gokula began to offer the fruits as *nikunja-bhoga*, and Babaji Mahashaya began to eat the fruits as *prasada*. This continued for two days. The third day the fever shot up too high and there was severe pain in the chest. This caused great anxiety to everyone. Baba's chest was bandaged with flannel after fomentation. Talks began regarding consultation with a good doctor, but Baba said, "Let us wait till tomorrow morning."

When night came Baba said, "Let only one man remain with me. The rest must go and sleep." So, only Gokula remained with him. At midnight Baba Mahashaya said to Gokula, "Gokula, you see those two earthen pots up there? Bring them down." Gokula brought them down. He saw that one of them contained pickles of mango and lemon, and the other contained jam of mango. He was alarmed and said, "Baba! You are ill. How can you eat these things?"

Baba said, "I am sick, but not Nitai. What can I do if Nitai wants to eat. You offer them." So saying he threw away the bandage and with his own hands arranged the pickles in a plate. Gokula was petrified, but he had to offer the *bhoga*. Baba Mahashaya ate up all the pickles, seven or eight oranges and a number of other fruits. None had ever seen him eating so much at one time before.

¹ The deity-form of the Lord in the temple.

Next morning everybody was full of great anxiety. They were seriously thinking of calling some doctor. But when they went to see Baba Mahashaya he said, "I am allright now. I shall take my bath." Everybody was surprised. The *kaviraja* came and examined his pulse and said, "Surprisingly, today there is no phlegm in the chest. On the contrary, *vayu* (air) has increased so much that you must eat fruits and you can also bathe."

Gokula was quietly watching everything so far, but now he could not remain quiet. He said, "*Kaviraja* Mahashaya! I am puzzled. I do not understand how the pulse of a patient of pneumonia, who ate at midnight seven or eight oranges, a pot full of pickles of mango, lemon and plum, a pot full of mango-jam and a number of fruits of various kinds, can indicate increase of *vayu* in the morning!"

Everybody was surprised to hear this. The *kaviraja* fell at the feet of Baba Mahashaya and said, "Kindly excuse me for the offense I have committed at your feet by offering to cure you. For you who can cure the disease of the soul that binds the *jivas* to the material world, the disease of the body must be a trifle. I am your child and I pray for your mercy."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Pray to Nitai. I am but a doll in His hands. I dance always as He makes me dance."

THE GIRL AND THE CHILD IN ECSTASY

After about a week, when everybody had recovered completely, Babaji Mahashaya set out for *nagara-kirtan*. After going some distance he entered a temple in which there was a beautiful life-size *vigraha* of Lord Nityananda. He and his party were transported with joy to see the deity and began to sing and dance before it with great emotion. Men and women of the village felt enchanted by the sound of the *kirtan* and

came rushing to the temple. They stood stunned to see their maddening love dance and to hear the heart-melting melody of their *kirtan*, the like of which they had never heard before. They heard Babaji Mahashaya saying to the deity of Nitai, "Look Nitai Chand! I am allured by the huge garland of Kadamba flowers hanging down from your neck up to the feet. I covet to wear that garland and dance before you." Immediately the garland fell down to the feet of the *vighraha* of Nitai Chand. Everybody was surprised. The *pujari* (priest) brought the garland and threw it round the neck of Babaji Mahashaya. As he did this the shout of "*Haribol!*" rent the sky. Babaji Mahashaya and his companions began to sing and dance with greater vigour and emotion. It was surprising that although the heavy garland was speedily moving to and fro with the dance, it never broke and fell down.

Several ladies were standing aside and watching the scene. Among them was a girl of sixteen or seventeen, her eyes were fixed on Babaji and tears were incessantly streaming out of them. Slowly swinging her head and clapping her hands with the beats of the music she came in the midst of the *kirtan* and began to dance. It appeared that she was completely unaware of herself. Her eyes were turned upward showing symptoms of *bhava*, her *saree* had fallen from her head and her hair was scattered. The other ladies were surprised, because the girl was married in an orthodox and respectable family, in which the moral codes of etiquette were strictly observed. She was also very sober and shy by nature and always kept her face covered by a long veil. For her to come forward and dance freely amongst strangers, all the time weeping and saying aloud "*Ha Nitai! Ha Nitai!*" was not only surprising to everyone but a matter of disgrace for her family.

Some people attributed this supernatural phenomenon to the power of the Name, and some to the power of the

mahapurusha leading the *kirtan*. But a Brahmin with a four or five year old child in his lap was angrily watching the whole affair. He suddenly burst out, "These Babajis have no sense of propriety. They do not know how to behave in society! And this girl, if she had belonged to my family, I would have taught her a good lesson for her *bhava* and *bhakti*." His words did not reach the ears of Baba Mahashaya or his companions, who were all absorbed in *kirtan*. But while he was gabbling like this his child got down from his lap and began to dance in the midst of the *kirtan*.

Babaji Mahashaya then came out of the *kirtan* and began to watch this *lila* of Nitai Chand from a distance. After some time the child fell senseless on the ground. His father, who had so far been watching his child's behaviour with surprise was dismayed and stupefied. He took him in his lap and began to weep and say to Babaji Mahashaya, "Baba! Save my child. I reprimanded you, not knowing that you might be a *mahapurusha*. Surely, that offense has brought me this punishment. Kindly excuse me and save my child."

Babaji said, "Don't worry, the child will soon be well. He is not an ordinary child. He is some *mahapurusha*, who has taken birth as your son, otherwise how could he develop this kind of *bhava* in *kirtan* at this age? So you need not be afraid. Pray to Nitai Chand."

Baba then began to sing:

"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."

His companions sang with him. Shortly after the girl became unconscious and lay down on the ground. The Brahmin was chanting the Name, but was weeping and wailing, "Ha Nitai! Ha Nitai!" Baba was filled with compassion to see him thus crying. He took the child from him, hugged him and uttered the *mantra* in his ear. Immediately the child

regained consciousness and came down from Baba's lap, and like one who was possessed began to admonish his father thus: "You have committed grave offense against the Name and the Vaishnavas. These are no ordinary persons. Each of them is great. Specially the person against whom your reprimand was particularly intended is so exalted that his personality beggars all description. You know that Sri Krishna accepted the *bhava* and *kanti* (luster) of Sri Radha and appeared as Sri Gauranga in order to relish His *Vraja-lila-rasa*. Sri Balarama, out of mercy for the *jivas*, wanted to teach them how to relish the *rasa* of the Lord, therefore He appeared with Ananga Manjari in one body as Nityananda. Both Gauranga and Nityananda could not relish each other's *lila-rasa* completely. Therefore They have now appeared together in one body in the form of this *mahapurusha*." Having said this the child again became unconscious. Baba again lifted and hugged him and began to chant *Harinama* loudly into his ears. After a short while, like one awakened from sleep, he went and sat in the lap of his father.

Meanwhile, the girl was lying unconscious, but the *ashta-sattvika-bhavas* constantly appeared on her body. Sometimes a smile played on her lips; sometimes she wore a mournful look. She seemed to rock between joy and pain—joy on the appearance and pain on the disappearance of the twin divinities of her heart, Radha and Krishna. Her face was radiant with the light of pure love (*prema*).

After some time, just as Babaji Mahashaya uttered the *mantra* in her ear and shouted "*Jai Nityananda Rama!*" she got up, rubbed her eyes and began to look all round in astonishment. Her natural disposition—shyness, fear and respect for the traditions of the family were all restored. She covered her head with her *saree*, drew a long veil and quietly went and stood amongst the ladies with eyes cast downwards in bewilderment.

Henceforth the talk of the town were the two episodes relating to the girl and the child, and the personality and *shakti* of Babaji Mahashaya, whom the inhabitants of Gurap began to regard as the incarnation of Nityananda.

CHAPTER 17

SANKIRTAN IN PLAGUE-RIDDEN CALCUTTA

After passing a few more days in Gurap Babaji Mahashaya decided to return to Navadwip. The people of the village wanted him to stay there for a few more days, but he explained to them in soft and sweet voice that he was completely in the hands of Nitai, Who made him dance as He wanted, and took leave of them.

MEETING WITH RAMA DAS

Once again the inhabitants of Navadwip were happy to find their dear Rajen Dada in their midst. Once again the city began to resound with the melody of *nagara-kirtans* led by him. One day Navadwip Das introduced to him a boy of tender age and said, "His name is Rama Das. He has sweet voice and is blessed with a heart which is always overflowing with Krishna-prema. His *kirtan* melts the hearts of even the greatest sinners, and makes them weep and cry 'Ha Nitai! Ha Gauranga!' Babaji Mahashaya embraced him and made him sit by his side. After some time he palmed him on his back lovingly and said, "Rama! Come, let us go to Hari Sabha." As soon as they were out in the street, he asked Rama to start *kirtan*, and Rama began to sing. Babaji Mahashaya and his companions repeated what he sang. Rama's sweet voice and

his soul-stirring *kirtan* flowing spontaneously from the bottom of his heart captured everybody. After they reached Hari Sabha the *kirtan* continued there for a long time in front of the deity of Sri Gauranga. After the *kirtan* was over Babaji Mahashaya again gave Rama Das a loving embrace and said, "Rama! You have given me great pleasure today. I bless you that your Krishna-*prema* may increase day by day and you be the benefactor and redeemer of the fallen souls of this age of Kali."

Baba's blessings bore fruit. Rama Das proved to be one of the foremost disciples of Babaji Mahashaya and was known later as the great saint of Pathbari Ashram, Calcutta, who had millions of disciples and set millions on the path of *bhakti*.

VISIT TO CALCUTTA

At this time a plague epidemic was rampant in Calcutta. It was taking a heavy toll of life everyday. The bank of the Ganges was piled with corpses, and the whole city wore a weird look. People were running away to other places. But many, who could not, always felt that they were in the jaws of death. They only cried and prayed.

Nitai Chand, who is always concerned with the spiritual well-being of the fallen souls, perhaps thought that the time was opportune for disengaging their minds from the meshes of *Maya* and turning them towards *bhakti*, for the seed of *bhakti* sprouts easily if cast in moments of adversity.

Who could cast the seeds more effectively than Barha Babaji Mahashaya. Therefore, it appears that Nitai, sitting in his heart entrusted him with the task. He decided to go to Calcutta. He started with ten or twelve companions, singing the Name of the Lord as usual, and reached Krishnanagara. They sat down under a tree near the station and started *kirtan*.

A gentleman came and asked Babaji, "Where will you go?"

"As desired by Nitai Chand we want to go to Calcutta," replied Babaji.

"The train arrives at twelve hours and twenty-four minutes. It is nine o'clock just now. Have you made some arrangement for your meal."

"We have not. Nitai Chand knows if He has made some arrangement for us."

"I can make some arrangement if you want. I am also going to Calcutta today. We can go together after taking our meal."

"If Nitai Chand so desires, what objection can we have?"

The gentleman took along with him Vidhubhusana, one of Babaji's companions and went to the market. They brought rice, pulses, vegetables and other things necessary for *bhoga*. The companions of Babaji Mahashaya prepared the *bhoga* and offered it to the Lord. They bathed in a pond nearby and took *mahaprasada*. At twelve o'clock they reached the station.

Baba's companions began to say to one another, "We have arrived at the station, but where are the tickets?" But Babaji Mahashaya seemed to be quite unconcerned. He was talking to the aforesaid gentleman and some other people in a care-free and happy mood, when suddenly the bell of the booking-office rang. The gentleman and other Babus ran to purchase their tickets. One of them asked Babaji, "What about your tickets?"

"I do not know. Nitai Chand knows," replied Babaji.

The Babu thought that Nitai Chand was perhaps the name of one of his companions, who had gone to purchase the tickets.

In the mean time the train arrived. A peon came and said "Baba! Hurry up! The train will leave soon."

The companions looked perturbed. They said to Babaji, "Baba! The train will leave."

Baba said, "If you have some money, you can purchase your ticket and board the train. I shall come when I have the ticket. Do I have to marry my son or daughter in Calcutta, so that I must go there at once? I shall wait here for ten days if Nitai Chand so wants. He will take me to Calcutta if He needs me there. If He does not, why should I bother? Why should you also bother?"

By now the passengers had all taken their seats in the train. The station master happened to see them. He asked, "Baba! Where will you go?"

"I do not know," replied Baba.

"Then who knows?"

"Nitai Chand knows."

"Don't you have money?"

"No, we don't. We do not need it either."

The station master looked somewhat concerned and said, "The train is about to leave."

"Let it leave. Let God's will be done. We shall go tomorrow or after ten days—as He wills," said Babaji Mahashaya like one totally unconcerned.

The station master was impressed by Baba's indifference and his total resignation to the will of the Lord. He looked at him with respect and amazement, then cast a glance upon his companions and went away. He returned after two minutes with tickets for everyone and saw them board the train and sit comfortably. Baba started chanting the Name with *khol* and *karatalas* and the train started moving, as if it was waiting only for the signal of the Name.

God is always bound by faith. He has Himself said, "I Myself assume the responsibility of the well-being of My devotees, who depend entirely on Me and think

always of Me and nothing else." (*Bhagavad-gita*, 9.22)

The train reached Sealdah Station at about 5 p.m. As soon as Babaji Mahashaya came out of the station he saw dead bodies being carried here and there and grave anxiety written on the faces of people, who finding no other means of escaping the jaws of death were chanting the Name of the Lord and praying for mercy. Baba Mahashaya also started singing, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*" His heart was filled with compassion for the people suffering from the scourge of plague. As he sang tears flowed from his eyes, and trembling, horripilation and other *sattvika-bhavas* appeared on his body. Attracted by his personality and *bhava*, people began to come from different directions and join his *kirtan*. It all took the shape of a *kirtan*-procession. The procession moved on without any plan. It marched slowly through Darjiparha and reached the market of Deoyanparha. A shopkeeper, whose name was Mukunda Gosh came down from his shop, made obeisance before the procession and said entreatingly to Babaji Mahashaya, "Baba! You and your party must grace my house today!" Baba said, "If that is Nitai's plan, what objection can we have?" and they moved into his house. His wife was a very hospitable lady and very affectionate by temperament. As Baba saw her he said, "Ma! I am very hungry. Give me something to eat." This was enough to further rouse her affection and make her treat him and his companions as her own sons. She entertained them with *prasada* of different kinds including delicious sweets brought by Mukunda Gosh from his shop. After taking *prasada* they retired to sleep.

The next morning they wanted to take leave of the hosts, but they would not let them go. Mukunda said to Baba, "Your mother wants that you should stay with her and give her the opportunity of serving you so long as you

It will come with a stroke and
sweep all away.
Then your wife and children
your name and fame
Will not go with you, you will go
alone, as you came.
So chant, O chant the Name
over and over again,
If you want freedom from
suffering and pain.
Haribol, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol!"

Thus singing he embraced whomsoever he saw whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian, and his magic touch made them also shout "*Haribol, Haribol!*" and dance and clap as they shouted.

On reaching the crossing of Baghbazaar the procession paused and continued *kirtan* for a long time. Some lawyers returning from the court began to watch the scene from the roadside. One of them said, "I have heard *kirtan* many times, but never one like this. This Babaji, it seems, is electrifying the hearts of the people by shouting '*Haribol!*' From his figure and *bhava* it appears that he is not an ordinary saint." The other lawyers totally confirmed what he said, but they did not have more time for comments. Babaji Mahashaya proceeded towards them dancing and singing with *bhava* and embraced them one by one. He had no sooner embraced them than they themselves began to shout "*Haribol!*" and dance, forgetting for the time being all about their self, their status, honor and dignity.

Several English men were also watching. One of them said, "This saint does not seem to be an ordinary person. God will certainly respond to his prayer. He is praying not for

himself but for others, and he is praying with all his heart and soul. If he remains in Calcutta for some time the plague is bound to be dispelled." The others said, "Yes, he seems very sincere. God will certainly attend to his call."

At 10 p.m. Babaji Mahashaya stopped *kirtan* and returned to Gosh's house. Even there many people followed him, the lawyers, the shopkeepers, the teachers, the students, the vendors and others. They forgot all about their homes and their respective duties, tempted as they were by the opportunity of having a little more of the soothing, alleviating and tranquilizing company of Baba Mahashaya. He, however, asked them gently to go home and come again to join the *kirtan* the next day.

Babaji Mahashaya stayed in Mukunda Gosh's house for a month. Every day he went for *nagara-kirtan* to some new locality of Calcutta or its suburbs. The people of that locality were informed about it well in advance, and they made elaborate arrangements for his reception and the entertainment of his party and all those who participated in the *sankirtan*. The locality of the township was beautifully decorated, with bunnings and gates, specially erected with bamboos and decorated with leaves, at intervals on the roads through which the *kirtan*-procession had to pass. Arrangements were also made at different places for ice-water and *dab* (water of green coconut) to quench the thirst of the processionists. Countless joined the *sankirtan*, countless, including even those who had no faith in God and never chanted the Name of the Lord, sang and danced in *kirtan* and went into ecstasy.

Needless to say that not only the scourge of plague disappeared totally, but the city of Calcutta was swept by a new current of *bhava-bhakti*. Many surrendered themselves at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya and took initiation from him. Many

turned a new leaf in their hectic and aimless life, which paved their way for ultimate deliverance.

The way in which Babaji Mahashaya disseminated the seeds of *bhakti* wherever he went was natural. He did not give any sermons or deliver carefully prepared speeches on *bhakti* or *prema*. He was himself an embodiment of *prema*. To see him was to realize that *prema* was the highest end and the culmination of all that was true, good, beautiful and blissful.

MEETING WITH PULIN BABU

To give an example of how by his mere presence he imbued *bhakti* in the hearts of people we shall quote briefly from the account of Sri Pulin Bihari Mallik, which was published in *Charit Suddha*:

"Unlike my elder brother Sri Kunja Bihari Mallik, who was himself a devout Vaishnava, I had a strong prejudice against Vaishnavas. I thought it was usually some idle, aimless and characterless people, who in order to hide their weakness, put on the garb of a devotee of God to cheat people. But one day, when Calcutta was writhing under the scourge of plague a *sankirtan* party entered the courtyard of my house dancing and singing, '*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*' In the midst of the party danced and sang a tall Babaji, and the others moved around him in a circle as they danced and sang. I never liked the dance and music of the Vaishnavas. If I ever looked at it, it was in the same spirit in which I looked at the dance of monkeys. But there was something in the dance and music of this party, and particularly in the mood of the Barha Babaji, which immediately touched my heart. I had seen the dances of many famous artists before, but never had I felt so much attracted. I cannot say whether a scientific analysis of

the dance would reveal anything special in it, but I am sure that anyone, who saw it once, could never forget it. It was a live dance, a dance that seemed to speak and elevate one to elysian heights. The *bhava* of the dance was a thing to be seen and felt, not to be described.

"*Kirtan* went on for about an hour, after which on my request the party sat down for rest in the drawing room of our house. Many people began to come for the *darshan* of Barha Babaji Mahashaya, and they asked him different kinds of question. His replies were so clear and convincing that everyone went back fully satisfied. What impressed me most was his non-sectarian attitude and the way in which he transcended all 'isms' and creeds, without denying them their proper place in the general scheme of things, and reconciled them in a higher synthesis provided by Mahaprabhu's religion of Love—which he regarded not as one religion among others, but as universal religion or the religion of mankind as such."

Babaji Mahashaya and his party had to stay with Mallik brothers on their request as long as they were in Calcutta. Everyday they went round performing *kirtan* through a new area of Calcutta. It was only after Calcutta was completely freed from the epidemic that he expressed the desire to go to Puri.

The news that Babaji Mahashaya would soon leave Calcutta came as a thunderbolt to the people of Calcutta. The Mallik brothers tried their utmost to persuade him to stay on for a few more days, but Baba was the master of his will. He would sometimes be as docile as a child and do as people would say and sometimes so adamant that nothing would shake him from his resolve. He said, "You know I am completely in the hands of Nitai. I dance always as He makes me dance. Just now He wants me to go to Puri

and I must obey. If He wills, I will come to Calcutta again."

Ultimately Kunja Babu asked Pulin Babu to purchase tickets for Babaji Mahashaya and his party of eighteen persons for their journey by steamer upto Chandabali—because there was no railway line direct from Calcutta to Puri during those days—and to see them off at the steamer-*ghat*. Pulin Babu had to comply. He returned from the steamer-*ghat* sad and disappointed, but with a rich treasure of memories that brought about a complete change in his life. The Pulin who once detested the Vaishnavas and ridiculed their performances, soon became a devout Vaishnava himself, and one of the closest and dearest disciples of Baba Mahashaya.

CHAPTER 18

BACK TO PURI

THE JOURNEY BY STEAMER

The journey began. The steamer started steaming and Babaji Mahashaya started *sankirtan*. The Muslim captain of the steamer shouted, "What is that noise!"

"No noise," replied Baba Mahashaya, "but the chanting of the Holy Name. It will not do you any harm. On the other hand it will ward off evil and beget good for every one."

"Stop it!" shouted the captain again.

So Baba Mahashaya stopped the *sankirtan*. Not very long after, a strong wind began to blow. The sea became turbulent and the waves began to splash the steamer and splatter. The passengers were alarmed and so was the captain. The captain saw that when the waves rose high and threatened to engulf the steamer Babaji Mahashaya shouted "*Jai Nitai!*" and immediately the waves subsided and the sea became calm. This happened a number of times. The captain then came running to Babaji Mahashaya and said apologetically, "Baba! I am sorry I stopped your chanting. It is on account of that offense that providence has sent this storm to punish me. Kindly start your *kirtan* again."

All other passengers, who had been watching the rise and fall of the waves at Baba's bidding, as it were, with surprise also made the same request. *Sankirtan* again started,

and the sea gradually became still, but no sooner had the steamer reached Kalapani than it was lashed by a much more severe storm. It began to be tossed up and down mercilessly by frenzied waves. The passengers were all but drowned. It appeared that the steamer was soon going to capsize. The captain and the passengers in their helplessness looked aghast at Babaji Mahashaya as the only hope of their survival. But Baba sat calm and composed and confident that *Harinama* would take care of them all. He only asked to chant more vigorously:

“*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*”

Everyone including the captain joined him in the *kirtan*. This continued for four hours. It seemed that a royal battle was being fought between *Harinama* and Nature. At the end Mother Nature had to surrender at the feet of *Harinama*. The storm was over, and the sky became clear. The passengers breathed a sigh of relief. The captain came and, humbly bowing at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya, said, “It is only by your mercy that our lives have been saved, otherwise in a furious storm like this there was no chance at all of our survival.”

Baba said, “Not my mercy Captain Sahib, the mercy of the Name. The power of the Name is infinite. There is no difference between the Name and the Lord. The Lord has infinite forms and infinite Names. Mahommad, Khuda, Allah, Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna, Nitai and Gaura are all His Names. There is substantially no difference between them. The difference is only in manifestation of *shakti* and *bhava*.”

It was night-fall when the steamer crossed Kalapani. It therefore cast anchor and the passengers passed the night in the steamer. The next morning it started and reached Chandvali at 11 a.m. Babaji Mahashaya got down from the

steamer and started *sankirtan* at the sea coast. The people of Chandvali were impressed with the *sankirtan*, but when they heard about the episode of the previous day they felt all the more attracted towards him and requested him to stay in Chandvali for a few days. Baba Mahashaya could not accede to their request because the Ratha-Yatra festival was drawing near and he wanted to be in Puri a few days before.

He had, however, to accept the invitations of Sharat Babu and Raghunatha Babu. He and his party took *prasada* at the house of Sharat Babu, and then started for the house of Raghunatha Babu, which was at some distance. They took one hour to reach there. They went on foot all the way singing and dancing. People, whether Hindus, Muslims or Christians were all surprised by the *sattvika-bhavas*—*asru* (tears), *kampa* (trembling) and *pulaka* (horripilation)—constantly appearing on the body of Barha Babaji Mahashaya. They said to one another, "He is certainly a *mahapurusha*. We have seen many *sadhus*, but never one like him. He has a magnetic personality and seems to draw us close to him." They shook off their pride and shyness and began to sing and dance with him. This in itself was regarded by many as a miracle.

At 5 o'clock in the evening Babaji Mahashaya embarked a boat bound for Cuttack. Sharat Babu had already sent a telegram to the postmaster of Cuttack saying that a *mahapurusha*, whose powerful prayers had saved a ship from capsizing and who had very much impressed the Hindus, Muslims and Christians of Chandvali by his equally powerful and harmonizing *sankirtan*, was going to Cuttack on way to Puri.

When the boat reached Cuttack, a number of people were already waiting at the sea-coast to receive Barha Babaji Mahashaya. They requested him to stay in Cuttack for some

time, but he could not stay there for more than a few days on account of the Ratha-Yatra festival. His short stay in Cuttack, however, marked the beginning of the end of widespread prejudice amongst the people against Vaishnavas. The people of Cuttack—specially the intelligentsia—were under the influence of Brahmasamaj,¹ and for the first time perhaps, they got an opportunity to see genuine Vaishnavas, before whom they could not but bow down in respect. Such respect was gradually converted into love, which later turned into worship, as testified by the Rasabihari Math² in Cuttack, where a life-size image of Barha Babaji Mahashaya is even today worshipped independently alongside the deities of Lord Gauranga, Radha and Krishna.³

KIRTAN IN THE TEMPLE OF JAGANNATH

After enrapturing and entrancing the people of Cuttack by his heavenly *kirtans*, and arousing them from their slumber of ignorance, Babaji Mahashaya started for Puri. The post-master of Cuttack had already informed Gopal Babu, the head-clerk of the post-office in Puri about the arrival of Babaji Mahashaya in Puri. The news had spread all over, and the people of Puri were in ecstasy on the prospect of finding their own Babaji Mahashaya in their midst after so long a time. So, when the train reached Puri at night, Gopal Babu, Balarama Babu, Ramakrishna Das Babaji, Bhuvana Mohana Saw, Kunjabihari, Vaishnava Charan Pattanayak and a host of other devotees and admirers of Babaji were present at the station to receive him with garlands. Babaji Mahashaya gave

¹ It was a new movement which looked askance at Vaishnavism.

² Math is a kind of monastery.

³ This was against the wish of Barha Babaji Mahashaya himself, who was most vehemently opposed to all attempts at his deification.

each of them a loving embrace, exchanged with them a few words, and then proceeded with his party to the Temple of Lord Jagannath, singing and dancing.

They could not have *darshan* of the Lord, because He had retired to bed during the night. The next morning, after taking bath in Narendrasarovara, they again went dancing and singing to the temple, and again they found the doors closed. This made Babaji Mahashaya impatient. He was reminded of Sri Gauranga rebuking Lord Jagannath in the mood of Srimati Radharani for His coldness and indifference in reciprocating Her love. He began to chastise the Lord in extempore verses, full of blame and satire, which he sang plaintively and pathetically. As he sang tears flowed from his eyes incessantly, and his throat was choked with emotion. The emotion spread and melted the hearts of all those present in the temple, and everyone began to shed tears of love crying, "*Ha Jagannath, Ha Jagannath!*" It appeared as if the sluice of the love-stream was lifted and the flood that ensued swept everyone away.

This continued for long and in the meantime the Lord enjoyed it all. For He relishes to be chastised by His loving devotee more than He relishes to be eulogized by him in the rituals of worship. At last the doors opened, but the chastisement continued:

*"After suffering the pangs of separation
So long Thy lotus feet I came to see,
But in hiding doth Thou remain
Only to tease, tempt and torment me.
O son of Nanda! For the sake of Thy love
I left the world, the family and kith and kin
The pleasures of life and all the rest
Only to please Thee and Thy heart to win*

But now what shall I say and to whom?
 How you smiled, winked and played the flute
 Then turned so cruel, so cold and mute.
 After all Thou art a cowherd, who liveth with cattle
 And knoweth only the cows and calves to tend.
 In love Thou art a novice, a laughing-stock,
 Who knows not how in love to dally,
 dance, mend and bend."

After *sankirtan* Babaji Mahashaya went out of the temple and sat on the *snana-mandapa*, surrounded by his followers and many new people. Many people had brought *prasada*, which Balarama Babu collected and served to everyone. Baba Mahashaya put some *prasada* in the mouth of Ramakrishna Das Babaji with his own hand; Ramakrishna Das Babaji did the same to Babaji Mahashaya, and others did the same with one another. When this love-*lila* was going on, Madhava Pashupalaka, a *panda* (servant) of Lord Jagannath came and said to Baba Mahashaya, "When you remain out of Puri, Jagannath remains sad. His happiness is revived when you come. I believe that you have some special and intimate relationship with Jagannath. Your *kirtan* makes us think that Mahaprabhu Himself has reappeared in your form to bless us." Baba Mahashaya immediately shouted, "Nitai! Nitai! Do not say like that. I am only a servant of the servants of Mahaprabhu."

After *prasada* Baba Mahashaya and his party retired to the vacant house of Harischandra Basu, in which Balarama had made arrangements for their stay.

SANKIRTAN AT THE HOUSE OF HARIVALLABHA BABU

The next day at night Babaji Mahashaya and his party were

invited for *kirtan* at the house of Harivallabha, an advocate. At sunset they reached his house singing, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*" Many lawyers and other important persons, including some *sannyasis* from Ramakrishna Mission had assembled at the house. They were all eager to listen to the *kirtan* of Baba Mahashaya. Many of them had some questions to ask, which they thought they would ask him after the *kirtan* was over. Some wanted to know whether he believed in Vedanta or not, and with that end in view they had prepared a number of questions. Harivallabha Babu wanted to examine whether he bore any grudge or ill will against any particular sect or person or not.

Baba Mahashaya performed dance and *kirtan* for half an hour and sat down. He took only a few seconds to read the questions in the minds of the people and then started *kirtan* again. We have said before that he rarely sang songs previously prepared by himself or by others. He had the supernatural gift of singing extempore according to the requirements of the situation in which he was placed by providence. So this time the *kirtan* had to be of a very special kind. It was not *rasa-kirtan* or *lila-kirtan*, but it was philosophical in content. At first the *kirtan* related to questions regarding Vedanta, like: What is the relationship between *Brahman*, *Atma* and *Bhagavan*? What is the relationship between *jnana* (knowledge) and *bhakti*? What are the different kinds of *jnana*? How does a real *jnani* behave? Baba himself raised these questions in his *kirtan* one by one and answered them. At first people thought that verses of this kind already existed and he was only repeating them in his *kirtan*. Soon it became clear that there were no such verses and that he had the rare gift of composing them as he sang. The Vedantists, who were sitting at some distance now came nearer and began to listen to the

kirtan with greater attention. There was no end to their surprise. The very questions they had thought of asking, and which they regarded as most difficult, were being answered systematically and convincingly through *kirtan*. Others also got satisfactory answers to the questions they had wanted to ask. The *kirtan* went on to expound the great sayings of Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gita* like: '*adveshta sarva bhutanam*,' '*sama sarveshu bhuteshu*,' '*sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja*,' symbolizing the synthesis of all religions. That removed all doubts of Harivallabha Babu and his friends regarding the large mindedness and catholicity of Babaji Mahashaya. Thus *kirtan* went on till 11:30 p.m. At the end all began to sing together, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama*." This time the *sannyasis*, the lawyers and all others also joined the *kirtan*. They danced and sang, clapping their hands as they danced. Everyone was thrilled and transported. No one wanted that the *kirtan* should stop. But Baba Mahashaya stopped it at 12 o'clock, so that no inconvenience was caused to them.

They came near and offered obeisances to him and began to express their gratitude and surprise at his removing their doubts and satisfactorily answering their questions without their asking them. Baba Mahashaya replied with characteristic humility, "Brethren, you should express your gratitude to Nitai Chand, not me. He is Omniscient and He knew your questions and answered them. I am only a tool in His hands."

RATHA-YATRA AND THE DEMISE OF CHAITANYA DAS

Today is Ratha-Yatra and Babaji Mahashaya is singing and dancing with his party before the gigantic wooden car as usual in ecstasy. When the *ratha* (chariot) reached Rajbari

suddenly something transpired in his mind and he quietly slipped out of the *sankirtan* procession. He entered the Ramachandi Lane and sat in the verandah of the house of Sri Gopal Prasada Dutta, the head clerk of the local post-office. He looked very sad and grave—so sad and grave that people who passed through the lane could not muster courage to ask him what worried him.

The cause of his anxiety was that the condition of his dear disciple Chaitanya Das, who had been ill for some time, had suddenly worsened. He was going to breathe his last and Babaji Mahashaya had come to know about it.

Chaitanya Das was living in a nearby house and Navadvip Das had appointed Jai Gopal Das, a young boy, to look after him. Jai Gopal was serving him with all his heart and soul. Chaitanya Das was a totally dedicated soul. His devotion was that of *madhurya-bhava*. He had the conceit and the sentiment of a *gopi*, who was engaged in the service of Sri Radha. His devotion towards the guru was exemplary. He knew nothing except the guru. Whether he was asleep or awake, whether eating, drinking, talking or meditating, the subject of his thought and speech was always the guru.

At this moment, when Jai Gopal saw that Chaitanya Das was fast drawing towards death, he stood aghast and did not know what to do. Chaitanya Das said to him, "Jai Gopal, there is no cause at all for anxiety. You somehow manage to bring gurudeva here. If you do that then alone I shall think that you are my true friend. I want to die while looking at Sri Gurudeva. There is only one thing that I can give you in return for this service. That is the *aprakrita* (transcendental) *gopi-bhava*, so difficult to achieve even by the *Rishis*, but which Gurudeva has kindly bestowed upon me. I heartily give the same to you. You have it, and even while you serve the Lord in this world enjoy the highest bliss of the transcendental world."

Now Navadwip Das was going all round in search of Babaji Mahashaya. When he came to Chaitanya Das, he was very much alarmed to see his condition. Jai Gopal told him that he was too anxious to see Gurudeva before he died, therefore he again set out in search of Babaji Mahashaya. He found him sitting in the verandah of Gopal Prasada Dutta in a pensive mood, completely oblivious of himself and the surroundings. Navadwip Das said to him, "Chaitanya Das is dying. He wants to have your *darshan* before he passes away." There was no response from Babaji Mahashaya, not even a sign to show that he heard what Navadwip Das had said. Navadwip Das returned and sent Jai Gopal to Babaji Mahashaya. Jai Gopal was but a boy, and he could hardly muster courage to go before Babaji Mahashaya, going to speak to him was out of question. But one does not know what *shakti* Navadwip Das gave him, he went and stood before Babaji Mahashaya and said commandingly, "What kind of a *mahapurusha* are you? Your disciple is dying and wants to have your *darshan* before he dies, but you are sitting here like one absolutely indifferent and unconcerned. Come, don't waste time." Babaji Mahashaya went and stood behind the bed of Chaitanya Das. Navadwip Das said, "Chaitanya, Dada has come." Chaitanya beckoned with his eyes so that he might come and stand before him. Babaji Mahashaya moved towards his feet. Chaitanya Das observed him from head to feet, then fixed his eyes upon his face. Then Navadwip Das lifted Babaji Mahashaya's right foot and placed it on Chaitanya's chest. Tears came out of the eyes of Chaitanya Das, as if to bid farewell to Babaji Mahashaya.

Babaji Mahashaya was so far standing motionless and speechless, but now his heart broke, and tears streamed out of his eyes. He said, with his throat choked with emotion, "O Chaitanya! You are leaving me to go where peace and happiness

reign supreme. What can I say, except that I take upon myself all your sins, past and present, so that you may go with a pure heart and attain the desired end—the loving service of the twin Lords of your heart—according to your *bhava*.”

Meanwhile the *ratha* of Jagannath came upto Kundaibentsahi and stopped there. Babaji Mahashaya's dear disciple Rama Das had so far been singing and dancing before the *ratha*, but now suddenly he felt an attraction and came running with the *kirtan*-party to Chaitanya Das. They were astonished to see a wondrous scene—a scene that was touching and delectable, inspiring and elevating. Chaitanya's eyes are fixed on the face of Babaji Mahashaya and he is drowned in the ocean of bliss at the touch of his lotus feet. There is a smile on his face and horripilation all over his body. He is not able to contain the happiness due to the realization of the supreme end of life. They were all inspired to sing aloud:

“Ha! Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama
Ha! Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.”

They sang with tears constantly streaming out of their eyes. All of a sudden they saw that the entire body of Chaitanya Das trembled as leaves tremble in the breeze. His eyes widened, he seemed to see something new in Babaji Mahashaya. He looked at him with exultation and astonishment, and with this he breathed his last. Shall we call this the end of life or the attainment of a life, much more happy and peaceful?

Kirtan continued for half an hour. During *kirtan* Chaitanya's face became more radiant. Navadwip Das removed the cloth from his chest, and he found two papers under it, one containing *Guru-vandana* (prayers to the guru) and the other containing a hundred thousand names of Gurudeva, which showed his utter dedication to the feet of

the guru. Babaji Mahashaya said mournfully with tears in his eyes and throat choked with emotion, "Nitai Chand had kindly given me the company of such a pure and dedicated soul. I do not know why He has now deprived me of it."

The body of Chaitanya Das was taken to the seashore with a *kirtan* procession. Babaji Mahashaya himself washed it with the water of the sea, dressed it with his own *kaupin* and *bahirvasa* and then clasped it and danced like one maddened in love. The face of Chaitanya Das rested on his shoulder and his arms were flung round his neck. Baba continued the dance for a long time. Who could stop him from this? People who saw this were reminded of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu dancing with the dead body of Thakura Haridas lifted in His arms.

After some time, when Babaji Mahashaya came to himself, Govinda Das took the body of Chaitanya Das from him and laid it on the pyre of sandalwood. Fire was set to the pyre and everyone circumambulated the burning pyre dancing and singing:

"Ha! Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Ha! Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."

CHAPTER 19

TALKS ON RAGANUGA BHAKTI AND RASA

One day Babaji Mahashaya and his party were going to the *kshetra* of Lala Babu for taking *mahaprasada*, when a gentleman named Pyari Babu met them on the way. He bowed down and said prayerfully but hesitatingly, "May I request you kindly to take *mahaprasada* at my place today?"

Babaji Mahashaya replied "Why not? We are beggars and if someone invites us for *mahaprasada* of his own, what objection can we have?"

Pyari Babu took them to his house and served them with *mahaprasada*. After they had taken *mahaprasada* he requested them to rest. While they were resting he said to Babaji Mahashaya, "Maharaja! I had the good fortune of having your *darshan* and listening to your *kirtan* at the time of Ratha-Yatra. Ever since then I have been longing to meet you and place my doubts and difficulties before you, so that I may be able to set my foot on the spiritual path with a clear mind and heart and with confidence."

Babaji Mahashaya said, "Come, let me know what your doubts and difficulties are. You can express them without the least fear or reservation."

Pyari Babu: "I would like to know what a fallen soul like

me should do so that he can make steady progress on the path of God-realization."

Babaji: "For weak, imbecile, sinful and *Maya*-bound *jivas* like us the only remedy is *nama-sankirtan*."

Pyari: "But there are many Names of the Lord, like Rama, Krishna, Dvarakanath, Gopal, Giridhari, Radharamana, Gopivallabha, and so on. Which of these Names should one take?"

Babaji: "There are so many Names because the Lord is infinite. He has infinite forms. Each form has a Name, which is identical with the form. The Name is the Lord Himself in that form. There have to be infinite forms, because there are devotees of different kinds, and their likings and dispositions are different. One has to choose a particular form according to his liking and fix his mind firmly on it."

PREMA

Pyari: "How can one set one's mind firmly on the form of God one likes? Mind by its very nature is unfixed. It moves always from one object to another."

Babaji: "The only way of fixing the mind is through *prema* or love. If you love your Lord with all your heart and soul, your mind will automatically turn from the other things and remain always fixed on the Lord."

Pyari: "How to get *prema*?"

Babaji: "*Prema* is eternally realized (*nitya-siddha*), it cannot be attained by any *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). It is a jewel that shines by its own light. Neither *sravana*¹ nor *kirtan*, nor other means can 'generate' *prema*.

¹ Listening to the description of the Names, form, attributes or the *lila* of the Lord.

"All spiritual disciplines aim mainly at the purity of the heart. When the heart is purified, *prema*—which is already there—becomes manifest. This may be explained by means of an example. Suppose a rich man keeps many jewels inside a box made of glass. Someone paints the box with black paint. Both the box and the jewels are lost to the view of the rich man. He begins to search the jewels here, there and everywhere, but not finding them anywhere he is struck with grief. The grief is so intense that it makes him lose his memory. He forgets that he ever had the jewels and asks everyone how to get jewels and become rich. He has only to remove the paint from the box to see that he already has the jewels. Similarly, one has only to remove the impurity of the heart by means of *sadhana-bhakti* to see and feel that *prema* is already there."

VAIDHI AND RAGANUGA-BHAKTI

Pyari: "It is said that there are two kinds of *sadhana-bhakti*—*Vaidhi* and *Raganuga*. What is the difference between the two?"

Babaji: "*Vidhi* means rule or law. *Vaidhi* or ritualistic *bhakti* consists in following the rules and regulations laid down in the *shastras*. The *shastras* specify certain rules of conduct. If a person violates those rules he goes to hell and suffers untold pain and misery. If he follows those rules, he goes to heaven and enjoys its pleasures. The *sadhaka*, who follows *vaidhi-bhakti* is prompted in his worship not by love of God, but by the fear of pain and the desire of happiness. Therefore, his *bhakti* is injunctory. It consists mainly in following the rules and regulations of the *shastras*. *Raganuga-bhakti*, on the other hand, is love oriented. In *raganuga-bhakti*, the devotee aims only at the happiness of the Lord. He cares little for his own happiness. Therefore he disregards the rules

and regulations of the *shastras* for the happiness of the Lord, if necessary.

“Externally, *vaidhi* and *raganuga-bhakti* may appear to be the same, but the mental attitude of both is different. In *vaidhi-bhakti* the devotee performs *seva-puja* (worship of the deity), because he thinks that the deity will be pleased, and if the deity is pleased, the result will be good for him. In other words, his desires will be fulfilled. In *raganuga-bhakti*, however, the devotee has no desire of his own. He only desires the happiness of the Lord, even if it be at the cost of his own happiness. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is constrained on account of fear of punishment on transgression of the rules and regulations of the *shastras*; *raganuga-bhakti* is spontaneous. It flows naturally from the heart, conditioned only by the love of the Lord. *Vidhi* says that one must bathe before he performs the *seva-puja* of the deity, because the body is not pure without bathing. *Raga* or love says, whether one bathes or not the heart should be pure. Love makes the heart pure. *Vidhi* says, the deity should be worshipped with white flowers because the *shastras* so enjoin. *Raga* says, whatever be the color, the flowers should have a smell that is pleasing to the Lord.”

Pyari: “Does this mean that *vaidhi-bhakti* is unnecessary and the *shastras* need not be obeyed?”

Babaji: “No, it does not mean that. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is necessary and the *shastras* must be obeyed until the heart is purified and the *sadhaka* becomes fit for *raganuga-bhakti*. Disregard for the *shastras* at the very beginning is fraught with evil consequences.”

RASA AND ITS VARIOUS KINDS

Pyari: “*Sruti*¹ says, ‘*Raso vai sah*,’ which means that

¹ The Veda.

Brahman is of the nature of *rasa*. What exactly is *rasa*? Is it *ananda* or bliss?"

Babaji: "*Rasa* is 'relish,' but relish of a very special kind. It implies *ananda* or bliss, but bliss of a very special kind. Both *ananda* and *rasa* are relished, but the relish of *rasa* has two distinctive qualities. Firstly, it is characterized by delicious astonishment. Astonishment is the essence of *rasa*. Therefore, *rasa* is always wonderful (*adbhuta*). Secondly, it is characterized by total absorption of the mind and the senses. The mind and the senses are so much absorbed in the astonishingly delicious experience of *rasa* that they become completely unaware of other things.

"*Rasa* is transcendental (*aprakrita*), or phenomenal (*prakrita*), but phenomenal *rasa* is not *rasa* in the real sense, because astonishment and absorption of the mind and the senses in phenomenal *rasa* is only momentary. Repeated enjoyment of phenomenal *rasa* diminishes all its charm. But repeated experience of transcendental *rasa*, or *rasa* pertaining to *Parabrahman* (or Bhagavan, the Supreme Person) does not make it less astonishing or less absorbing, because He is full of infinite variety—which makes Him eternally new. *Parabrahman* Sri Krishna is new at every moment. He is both *rasa* and *rasika* or the enjoyer of *rasa*. Therefore He is new at every moment, both as *rasa* or the object of relish, and as *rasika* or the enjoyer of relish."

Pyari: "Are there different kinds of *rasa*?"

Babaji: "Broadly speaking there are five kinds of *rasa*—*Shanta*, *Dasya*, *Sakhya*, *Vatsalya* and *Madhura*. In *shanta-rasa* the devotee has faith in a God, Who creates and governs the universe, and worships Him as such. He does not cultivate any kind of relationship with Him. The other four *rasas* imply some kind of relationship with the Lord—relationship as between master and servant in *dasya*, as between friend and

friend in *sakhya*, as between father and son in *vatsalya* and as between husband and wife in *madhura-rasa*.

“Furthermore, the quality and intensity of *rasa* which a devotee experiences depends on the extent to which his *bhava* is conditioned by *Aishvarya* or *Madhurya*. *Aishvarya-rasa* is the relish of a relationship cultivated under the sentiment of awe and reverence toward the Supreme Lord. *Madhurya-rasa* is the relish of a relationship cultivated under the sentiment of being very intimately close to Krishna. The less it is conditioned by *aishvarya* and the more by *madhurya*, the higher is the *rasa* experienced by the devotee.

“The devotees whose *dasya-bhava* is conditioned by *aishvarya*, or *aishvarya* mixed with *madhurya*, attains the service of the Lord in Vaikuntha, Dvaraka, Mathura or Goloka. Those whose devotional service is conditioned by pure *madhurya* attain the Lord in Vrindavan. The devotees of *dasya-bhava* are generally those who practice *vaidhi-bhakti*. They cannot have *sakhya*, *vatsalya* or *madhura-bhava*, for which only the devotees practicing *raganuga-bhakti* are qualified.

“*Sakhya-bhava* may be pure or mixed with *aishvarya*. The devotees whose *sakhya-bhava* is mixed with *aishvarya* attain the Lord in Dvaraka or Mathura. Their examples are Uddhava and Arjuna. When these devotees see the *aishvarya* of the Lord, they become conscious of His divinity and begin to regard themselves as offenders on account of behaving towards Him like friends. The devotees of pure *sakhya-bhava* attain the Lord in Vrindavan. Their examples are Sridama, Subala and Madhumangala, etc. They do not regard Krishna as God, even when they see His *aishvarya*. So, when Krishna lifts Govardhana hill, they run to His help by trying to support the hill with their staffs. They do not even hesitate in climbing His shoulders or giving Him things to eat, part of which they have eaten themselves. Their pure love, which is

not affected in the least by Krishna's *aishvarya*, makes Krishna also forget His own divinity. The highest development of *rasa* is possible only when neither the devotees nor Bhagavan are conscious of His divinity. This is possible only in Vraja, where Bhagavan has the two-armed—human-like—form and knows Himself as the son of Nanda and Yashoda, and not as *Parabrahman*, Who is eternal and without any beginning or birth. The peacock feather, which He is fond of wearing as His crown and His flute, are the emblems of *madhurya*, not of *aishvarya*. Therefore the *priti-rasa* of Vraja is the highest *rasa*, and the *lila* of Vraja is the highest *lila*.

"*Vatsalya-rasa* also is either mixed with *aishvarya* or pure. The examples of the former are Vasudeva and Devaki. Their place is in Mathura and Dvaraka. They forget their parenthood on seeing the *aishvarya* of the Lord. This is evident from the fact that soon after His birth, when Krishna assumes the four-armed form to test their *vatsalya*, they begin to pray to Him with folded hands. They can never even think of scolding or chastising Krishna as their son. The examples of pure *vatsalya-bhava* are Nanda and Yashoda. Yashoda sees the entire universe within the mouth of Krishna, yet she cannot think of Him as Bhagavan. She thinks that it is the effect of some god or demon, who has temporarily taken possession of Him and tries to propitiate him. She always regards Him as her tender child, Who needs her care and protection. She, therefore, feeds and fondles Him, and does everything possible to make Him happy, but she also frowns upon Him and even punishes Him, when He misbehaves.

"In *Madhurya-rasa* the devotees are women. We should, however, remember that basically the devotees, who are engaged in the loving service of Krishna are neither male nor female, because such forms pertain to the physical body, which is the product of *Maya*, while these devotees are on the

transcendental plane, where *Maya* is non-existent. Their male or female forms are due to their *bhava*. In fact, their bodies are *bhava-deha*, that is, they are made of *bhava*. The *bhava* moulds itself into the body that is appropriate to it.

“The women in *Madhurya-rasa* fall into two categories—*svakiya* or those that are married to Krishna, and *parakiya* or those that are not married to Him. The *svakiyas* are the sixteen thousand and one hundred and eight queens of Dvaraka. The *parakiyas* are the *gopis* of Vraja. The *svakiyas* are devoted to Krishna, but their love is *sakama* or such as is accompanied by desire for their own happiness in as much as they cannot do for Krishna anything that is immoral or against the *shastras*, for fear of going to hell. But the love of the *gopis* is wholly *niskama* (without personal desire). They would do anything that pleases Krishna even if they have to go to hell. The love of the *svakiyas* is *sapeksa* or relative, since it depends on a sense of duty towards the husband. The love of the *parakiyas* is independent of any sense of duty. It is not sanctioned love, but love that is natural and spontaneous. It is on a higher plane, which transcends morality or immorality. The *gopis* of Vraja, therefore, dart towards Krishna like an arrow on hearing His flute at the time of the *rasa-lila*, thus ignoring the commands of their elders and the sanctions of the Vedas, which prohibit such action.

“Once Narada had some doubt regarding the extent to which the *gopis* could sacrifice themselves for the sake of Krishna. Sri Krishna removed his doubt through a *lila*. He pretended to have fever and said that the fever could be cured only by taking the *charanamrita* of anyone of His beloved. Narada went to Rukmini, Satyabhama and each one of the sixteen thousand and hundred and eight queens of Dvaraka, and requested them to give their *charanamrita*. The queens knew that if they did not give their *charanamrita* Krishna

would suffer. But even knowing this, they did not give their *charanamrita* for fear of committing an offense and going to hell. But when Narada made the same request to the *gopis* of Vraja, they vied with one another in giving their *charanamrita*, caring not for a moment for what will happen to them."

Pyari: "So I understand that there are five different kinds of *rasa*. Each of these *rasas*, except the *shanta-rasa*, implies a special kind of relationship with the Lord, and a special kind of *bhava*. In *raganuga-bhakti* the devotee meditates upon the Lord according to the particular *bhava* that is dear to him. But does he in this way establish direct personal relationship with the Lord?"

Babaji: "No. You see, *raganuga-bhakti* is imitation of *ragatmika-bhakti* or the *bhakti* of the *parikaras* (the divine associates) of Krishna in Vraja, who are the embodiments or types of the different kinds of relationship with Krishna. The types of *dasya* are Raktaka, Patraka, Madhukantha and others; the types of *sakhya* are Sridama, Sudama, Subala and others, the types of *vatsalya* are Nanda, Yashoda and others; and the types of *madhura* are the *gopis* of Vrindavan. In *raganuga-bhakti* the devotee only imitates the particular mode of *ragatmika-bhakti* that suits his natural inclination. It is not possible for an ordinary person in physical body to attain the *ragatmika-bhakti* of the *parikaras* of Bhagavan, whose bodies are made of divine bliss. But *raganuga-bhakti* prepares the devotee for attaining it in a transcendental body."

THE TRANSCENDENTAL BODY

"So long as the devotee stays in the physical body, he performs *sravana* and *kirtan*, and observes the other rules of *vaidhi-bhakti* outwardly, but inwardly he imagines himself to be in the transcendental body appropriate for the type of

bhava to which he is naturally inclined, and to be serving Krishna day and night through that body. By constant meditation or *smarana*, he makes the whole of *Vraja-lila* live before him. He enters into that *lila* in his imagination, and by serving Krishna, according to the particular *bhava* or mode of *bhakti* adopted by him, lives in the ecstasy of that vicarious pleasure. The imaginary transcendental body (*antashchintit siddha deha*), however, is not wholly imaginary. It is mental reflection of the transcendental body, which Bhagavan—out of His infinite kindness—imparts to the devotee. Bhagavan imparts to him a transcendental body exactly like the one which he imagines himself to possess, and which is essential for the particular mode of *bhakti* practised by him. He is bound to do so on account of His always being subservient to the devotee. The imaginary or contemplated transcendental body, therefore, is just the transcendental body proper in the making. *Smarana* or contemplation, and the service of Krishna through the medium of the imaginary transcendental body is the very essence of *raganuga-bhakti*. But this should not be done to the exclusion of the external observances of *vaidhi-bhakti* through the physical body, because they are also helpful in *raganuga-bhakti*."

Pyari: "But Maharaja, I would like to know one thing. If someone is so fallen and weak that he can neither practise *raganuga-bhakti* nor *vaidhi-bhakti*, is there no way by which he can attain the lotus feet of the Lord?"

THE GURU AS ATTORNEY

Babaji: "Why not? Take the example of a similar situation in the mundane sphere. Suppose you are the owner of a big estate, which has to be managed well and there are a number of cases concerning the estate pending in the court,

but you are illiterate or mentally and physically so weak that you cannot do anything, then what will you do?"

Pyari: "It is easy. I shall give attorneyship to a capable person, who will do everything for me."

Babaji: "The same is true of the spiritual world. If you are not capable of doing anything, you should give attorneyship to someone who is capable of doing everything for you. You should surrender yourself completely at the feet of the guru. If you surrender yourself completely and sincerely, and depend wholly upon him, it would be his responsibility to see that you realize Krishna."

Pyari: "Does it mean that in that case one need not do any *sadhana*?"

Babaji: "In that case one should try as far as possible to practise the *sadhana* prescribed by the guru. But if he cannot practise it, he should not do anything that is against the precepts of the guru or the injunctions of the *shastras*. Guru is like the boatman, who promises to carry you across the ocean. He rows and asks you to row, so that you reach the destination more quickly. But if you cannot row as he wants, you must not row haphazardly in different directions. You should remain sitting quietly, with faith and confidence that he will take you across, sooner or later."

Pyari Babu then fell at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya with tears in his eyes and said with a voice choked with emotion, "Baba! I am a fallen creature, who is drowning in the ocean of *Maya*, and is fighting helplessly with the waves. I do need a boatman to take me across. I do not know how and where to find one. I therefore, surrender myself completely at your feet. Kindly accept me as your servant for ever and ever, and never leave me."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Do not worry. You are mine."

CHAPTER 20

MIRACLES IN BHAKTI-YOGA

CONVERSION OF A YOGI

Barha Babaji Mahashaya was a skilled builder of human personality. Like a skilled sculptor he shaped and moulded everyone whom he met, whether atheist or theist, sinner or saint, *jnani* or yogi into the mould of *shuddha* (pure) *bhakti*. His strategy was simple. He first established a rapport with the new man by giving him a loving embrace, then he peeped into his heart. If he found there any angularity that would not let him fit into the mould of pure *bhakti*, unmixed with *jnana*, *karma* or yoga, he tried to round it off by appropriate means. A typical example of this is the metamorphosis of Baba Basant Kumar Das, a *Hatha*-yogi, who was proud of his attainments in yoga and looked contemptuously upon *bhakti*. An interesting account of how in a trice he was cast into the mould of *bhakti* by Babaji Mahashaya is given in *Charit Suddha* in his own words, which are as follows:

"I went to Jagannath Puri at the time of Ratha-Yatra in the year 1897. I saw that a group of people, who looked neither like *sadhus*, nor *sannyasis*, nor *grihasthas* (householders), were dancing and singing aloud:

‘*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*’

"All of them wore a *tulasi-kanthi* around their neck and *tilaka* on their forehead. On their body they wore a *chadar* (a sheet of cloth) in such manner that it covered them upto the feet. In their midst there was a tall person, who particularly attracted my notice. I concluded from the *aprakrita* (transcendental) *bhava* that seemed to radiate from his face that he was a *mahapurusha*. His *darshan* aroused an inexplicable feeling in my heart and I kept on looking at him like one who was under a spell. After some time the group came dancing and singing near me. I bowed down to them with reverence. As I did so, the *mahapurusha* also bowed down to me and gave me a loving embrace. Oh! the magic of that divine touch, the soothing effect it had, the thrill it sent in my body. I felt as if I was completely sold out to him. I kept standing like one who was at a fix and did not know what to do. The *mahapurusha* took me along with him to the Temple of Jagannath. There they performed *sankirtan* for some time and then they proceeded to the Kotabhoga Math, where they were invited for *mahaprasada*. They took me along with them. We were made to sit in a room of the Math. Soon after it began to rain torrentially. The courtyard of the Math was filled with water, which was knee-deep. A little later we were called for *mahaprasada*, which was to be served in a room on the other side of the courtyard. The *mahapurusha* exclaimed like a child, 'I will not wade through water. Someone should take me there in his lap.' Such was the magic of his words that inspite of his massive figure, I had to say, 'Come, I will take you there in my lap.' Immediately he sprang like a child in my lap. I felt that he was light like a doll made of cork and I had no difficulty at all in carrying him. But I had just crossed the courtyard when he became so heavy that it was impossible for me to carry him even a step further. I had to make him get down in the verandah, instead of taking him inside the room.

The *mahapurusha* made me sit by his side in the dining room. The *mahaprasada* was served and we were asked to start eating after *Hari-dhvani*. The *mahapurusha* then took three or four peppers and a small quantity of each of the other things from his plate and mixed them all into a lump. He put a portion of it into my mouth with his own hand. It was so pungent that as soon as I swallowed it I felt that my mouth, throat and stomach were burning. Tears came out of my eyes. The *mahapurusha* said, 'Oh! It is troublesome. Then take this, it will be soothing.' So saying he put another morsel into my mouth from the same mixture. Oh! It was so soothing, so delicious and sweet-smelling! I had never eaten such a thing before. How wonderful! In both cases it was one and the same thing affecting in two different ways at one and the same time. I had seen so many saints in my life, but never one with power to do such impossible things. I understood that the *mahapurusha* had performed this *lila* only to humble me., The pride of my yogic attainments was now gone, and along with it was gone my contempt for *bhakti*. I was convinced, as I had heard sometime before, that all the different *siddhis*, which the yogi attained after a long course of arduous exercises, came to a devotee of their own, even though he never wanted or tried for them. I surrendered myself completely at the feet of the *mahapurusha* and began to live with him, and do as he ordained, for the rest of my life."

THE DELIVERANCE OF A BITCH

Once Babaji Mahashaya was going with his *sankirtan* party along the highway of the city of Puri, when a bitch was found sitting on the road, giving out piteous outcries which attracted the notice of our Babaji Mahashaya. He stopped short in the middle of the *sankirtan*, and enquiring about the

cause of her distress, came to know that she was mourning for her four puppies, taken away from her to be reared by some gentleman of another part of the city.

She was sorely aggrieved and could not be persuaded to take food and drink. Babaji Mahashaya approached her, bowed down to her, and started sermonizing her thus: "Ma, this is after all the way of the world. The union of friends and relatives is inevitably followed by separation. All beings are in the hands of God, bound to live and move as He wishes. Attachments of all kinds—filial, affectionate and all the rest arise out of ignorance of our true selves in duty bound to serve our Lord. Being born as you are in the Blessed Land of the Lord, and having already had enough of the world to be tired of, it is high time that you should turn to godly ways of life—hearing the Name of the Lord in the company of devotees, and partaking of nothing but the *mahaprasada* to keep you alive. Now Ma, if you accompany us to our lodging, you will have a hundred sons in the person of myself and my attendants instead of the four you have lost by chance. There you would find all possible care and comfort at our hands." The bitch looked steadfastly in his face as he was thus speaking to her, and then when Babaji Mahashaya went on, she followed as she heard him say, "Come with us, and you shall have *mahaprasada*." The devotees were struck with wonder to see and hear all this, and they all took the dust of the road where she was seated to bless their soul with it.

The bitch came. She was served with *mahaprasada* every day. She would go with Babaji Mahashaya wherever he went at the head of his *sankirtan* party. She would never partake of anything but *mahaprasada*, even when other kinds of food were offered to her. She would sound like the blowing of conches when evening *arati* service was going on in the temple, and would uplift her forefeet and cry out 'Ho! Ho!'

whenever Babaji Mahashaya shouted 'Haribol!' at the pitch of his voice.

RADHARAMANA KUNJA: THE MIRACLE OF MAHAPRASADA

The afore-mentioned Babu purchased a Math in Puri. The Math was named Radharamana Kunja after the name of the deities installed there. It was situated in a secluded place, where the environment was peaceful, and Babaji Mahashaya often lived in it. One day he called Navadwip Das Babaji and said, 'Navadwip, go and invite some *ananda-murti*¹ Vaishnavas for the *prasada* of Radharamana."

Navadwip Das was surprised, because Babaji Mahashaya used to say that all Vaishnavas were by nature *ananda-murti*, that is, they were the very image of *ananda*. Why then, he thought, did he specify the *ananda-murti* Vaishnavas? Obviously, he wanted to invite some special category of Vaishnavas. Navadwip Das, who was one with Babaji Mahashaya in thought, word and deed, however, did not lose time in understanding which class of Vaishnavas he wanted to be invited, and said, "The Vaishnavas have been invited." "What?" said Babaji, "You have not yet gone anywhere. How have the Vaishnavas been invited?"

"The Vaishnavas were invited the moment you desired them to be invited!" replied Navadwip. This was the conversation between the two *siddha-mahapurushas*. Each understood what the other meant, but no one else could understand it.

Babaji added, "Some sweets, curd and *pattals*² will also be

¹ Embodiment of happiness.

² Plantain leaves or any other leaves joined together to serve as plates.

required. But you need not bother about that. Nitai will arrange for everything."

At about ten o'clock came a man and a *gvala* (cowherd) with some sweets, curd and *pattals*. The man said to Babaji Mahashaya, "I have brought these things for the *bhoga* of Radharamana."

Babaji asked, "Did someone ask you to bring them?"

"No," replied the man, "I went to Jagannath's Temple for *darshan*, and when I reached *Simhadvara* (the southern gate of the temple) it came to my mind that I should offer some sweets to Radharamana. So I went to the sweet-seller and asked him whether he had any fresh *rasagullas*¹ for Radharamana. This *gvala* was also there, and he said, "Babu, I also have some curd for Radharamana."

"Very well," I said, "How many pots of curd have you?"

He said, "Four pots."

So I asked him to come along with me. As we were coming, a cloth-merchant named Haripatra asked me, "Where are you going?"

"I am going to Barha Babaji Mahashaya," I replied.

Immediately he said, "Then I need not go. You may kindly give him this milk and *khandas* (raw sugar) and also these plantain-leaves. If he asks anything you can tell him that Nitai Chand has so wished."

Navadwip Dada had so far been sitting quietly. Suddenly he shouted "*Bol*² *Nityananda!*" and shot out dancing and singing, "*Bol Nityananda bol, Nityananda bol!*"

At 12 o'clock Babaji Mahashaya heard sky-rending *sankirtan* sound coming from outside the *kunja* (garden). Immediately he went out and saw Navadwip coming along with

¹ A Bengali sweet prepared from milk.

² Say or sing.

a crowd of one hundred children, boys and girls, dancing and singing like one, who had gone mad and was completely lost in himself. As the crowd came near, Babaji Mahashaya also joined it and began to sing. The children surrounded him and began to sing, "*Bol Nityananda bol, Nityananda bol!*" with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. *Sankirtan* went on for about an hour. Then Babaji Mahashaya made the young *ananda-murti* Vaishnavas sit in a line for *prasada*. Yes, they were Vaishnavas because Babaji Mahashaya regarded everyone who resided in the *Bhagavata-dham* Puri as a Vaishnava, and *ananda-murti*, because the children were simple, pure-hearted and joyful by nature.

Jai Gopal was asked to serve *prasada*. He was in a quandary, because the *prasada* was sufficient only for about twenty persons and he had to serve it to about one hundred twenty persons, including the beggars who had arrived on the scene. So, he was serving in small quantity. Babaji Mahashaya was aware of the situation. He said angrily, "What are you doing? Serve well and serve full. Why are you so calculative? You have been asked to serve, not to calculate. Leave that to *mahaprasada* itself. Don't you know that *mahaprasada* is *chinmaya* (spiritual) and merciful? If you don't have faith in *mahaprasada*, what kind of a Vaishnava are you?"

Jai Gopal began to serve accordingly. And what a surprise! Each one of the one hundred twenty persons took the *prasada* to his heart's content, yet what was left was more than enough for the fifteen persons living at Radharamana Kunja.

ABSOLUTE SURRENDER TO HARINAMA

One day Babaji Mahashaya decided to go out for *nagara-kirtan*. He first went to the house of Gopal Babu, the headclerk

of the local post-office, so that he might also participate in it. His party followed him dancing and singing. As the *kirtan* was going on in the courtyard of Gopal Babu's house, Gopal Babu took Navadwip Das aside and said, "I have to go to the post-office earlier today on account of some important work. So, I cannot accompany the *kirtan*" Navadwip Das said, "Then you bow down to the *kirtan* and go to the office, and we go out for *nagara-kirtan*."

Just when Gopal Babu was about to start for the office, Babaji Mahashaya took the *khol* out of the neck of Jai Gopal and put it round Gopal Babu's neck. What could Gopal Babu do? The *sankirtan*-party moved and he moved along with it, playing on the *khol*. Others in the party got anxious about him and thought of relieving him somehow, but Babaji Mahashaya liked him playing on the *khol* so much that he always kept near him in *sankirtan*. This time also he was so close to him that no one had the courage to do anything to relieve him.

The *kirtan*-party circumambulated the Jagannath Temple and proceeded towards Harchandisai, the place where only the *pandas* and *pujaris* of Jagannath live. The *sankirtan* was so thrilling and enchanting that all of them came running and began to sing and dance in it. Their children danced joyfully in front of the *kirtan*. Everyone was in ecstasy. The *kirtan*-party went to Tota Gopinath and the *samadhi* of Haridas Thakura, and marching through the road leading to the court, reached back the Ashram at about one o'clock. Gopal Babu then kept the *khol* aside and made obeisance before Babaji Mahashaya. Looking at him Baba said with a start, "Gopal! Didn't you have to go to the office?"

"Yes, I had to go," replied Gopal Babu.

"So, what is the time now?"

"It is one o'clock."

"It is one o'clock and you have not yet gone! Will you not get in trouble?"

"How can I say? You know all about that."

"At what time do you go to the office every day?"

"At ten, and sometimes even earlier. Today I had to go at nine."

Baba Mahashaya was taken aback, but he said, "However, Nitai Chand wishes that you do not go to the office at all today." Gopal Babu obeyed.

He went to the office the next day and started his work. Nobody said anything. The postmaster was all the time talking of Barha Babaji Mahashaya and praising him. At the end Gopal Babu went to sign the attendance register. While signing he thought, "Since no one has said anything to me about yesterdays absence, it is obvious that Babaji Mahashaya himself came to the office in my guise and did all my work. Did he not prove thereby that I was not absent? Why shouldn't I, therefore sign the register for yesterday as well, as if I forgot to sign yesterday?" So he turned the page and signed for the previous day as well.

When Gopal Babu returned from the office, he told everything to Babaji Mahashaya. Babaji Mahashaya said, "If absolute surrender to *Harinama* and faith in its unlimited power can solve all problems relating to the spiritual world, why can't it solve the trifling problems of this world. What is necessary is faith. If *Harinama* does not give any result it is because we are lacking in faith."

Gopal Babu fell at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya and said with tears in his eyes, "Prabhu! I am a sinner and I do not do any *bhajan*, yet you take so much trouble for me. Kindly forgive all my offenses and bless me so that birth after birth I get the shelter of your lotus-feet." Babaji Mahashaya lifted him up and hugged him, thereby assuring him that his prayer would be fulfilled.

Others sitting near him shouted together, 'Jai Nityananda!'

LORD JAGANNATH BLESSES JAI GOPAL WITH SAKHI-BHAVA

Jai Gopal Das was still a boy, but he had made himself dear to everyone in the Ashram by his service. He was not interested so much in *kirtan* as in the service of Sri Guru and the Vaishnavas. He had taken upon himself the task of cooking and serving in the Ashram, but dearer than anything else to him was the service of Barha Babaji Mahashaya. Navadwip Das had trained him in this. Externally he was always engaged in service, but internally his *bhava* was that of a *sakhi* (girl companion of Radharani). He imagined that the Ashram was the *kunja* of Radharani and the Vaishnavas in the Ashram were her *sakhis*, and that his service of the Ashram and the Vaishnavas was service to Radharani and her *sakhis*. Some other Vaishnavas of the Ashram also had *sakhi-bhava*. As an external aid to that *bhava* they kept their heads covered with a part of the *chadar* they wore, like females. They often danced in that *bhava* for the pleasure of Lord Jagannath in the temple.

One day Madhava Pashupalaka, the *Sringari-panda*¹ of Jagannath came to visit Babaji Mahashaya and gave him the *charan-tulasi*² of Jagannath and His *prasadi-mala*.³ At that time Jai Gopal was standing behind Babaji Mahashaya and was fanning upon him. Madhava Pashupalaka said, "Baba, when I see this boy and some of his companions dancing before Jagannath they appear to me like the *sakhis* of Vraja. You will be surprised to know that one day, when I was offering

¹ The *panda* or servant whose duty is to dress and decorate Lord Jagannath.

² *Tulasi*-leaves offered at the feet of Lord Jagannath.

³ The flower-garland worn by Lord Jagannath.

dhoop (incense) to Jagannath, I actually saw them wearing *ghagara*¹ like the *sakhis* of Vraja. I said to myself, 'Perhaps Baba Mahashaya has made them put on the *sakhi-vesh* (the dress of the *sakhis* of Vraja) today. Oh! How beautiful they look.' Exactly when I was lost in this thought, the *mala* (garland) worn by Jagannath slipped and fell down. I thought that this had some special significance. So I brought and gave that *mala* to you, and you gave it to this boy. That day I could not reveal this secret to you. Today, as prompted by Jagannath, I have specially come to tell you all about it."

Babaji Mahashaya said, "You are a favourite of Jagannath. You can make even the impossible possible. Kindly bless him so that his desire is fulfilled and he fully realizes the *bhava* he covets." As he said this he made a gesture to Jai Gopal, and Jai Gopal lay prostrate before the *sringari* in obeisance. The *sringari* placed his hand over his head and said, "May Jagannath bless you."

As if a step in immediate fulfilment of the wish and blessings of Jagannath, which the *sringari-panda* had brought in the shape of His garland, Babaji Mahashaya performed a *lila*. He asked Kunja Babu, one of his disciples, to sing a *kirtan*-song relating to Sri Krishna's going to the forest for tending cows. He started singing. When the particular portion in the song, relating to Radharani's standing on the flat roof of Tungamani Mandir to see Krishna going to the forest was sung, Jai Gopal made the deity of Radharani stand on a *chauki* (small base). With every change in the *bhava* of the *kirtan* he made the necessary changes in the dress, position, and movement of the deities, to assist in the visualization of Their *goshta-lila*.² When the *kirtan* described the meeting of Radha

¹ A woman's dress reaching from the waist to the ankles, with numerous folds, which spread out at the time of dancing.

² *Lila* relating to Krishna's going to the forest for tending cows.

and Krishna in Radhakunda, he made Radharani sit by the side of Krishna. He and Advaita Das stood behind to fan upon Them. Radhagovinda, Kishorigopal and four or five others started dancing in front of the deities. Babaji Mahashaya then began to sing a song describing the beauty and glory of Radhakunda. Every one danced and sang in ecstasy, but Jai Gopal was weeping constantly. Tears were incessantly flowing from his eyes. Suddenly he fell unconscious near the deities. At this time Babaji Mahashaya came dancing near him and uttered a *mantra* in his ear. He got up, flung one end of his *chadar* over his head and went and sat in a corner of the temple, sobbing and weeping. Just then came a man holding a *saree* in his hands and said, "Jagannath, sitting in my heart, told me that one of you needs a *saree*. So I have brought it. Who will wear it?" Navadwip Das made Babaji Mahashaya wear the *saree*. The situation aroused *sakhi-bhava* in his mind and he began to dance like one possessed by a *sakhi* of Vraja. Tears of love constantly streamed out of his eyes and *sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body. Others caught the emotional current emanating from him and they also began to dance and sing madly under the spell of that *bhava*.

After about an hour Babaji Mahashaya came to his own. He then gave the *saree* to Navadwip and whispered something into his ear. Navadwip went and made Jai Gopal wear the *saree*. After Jai Gopal had worn it, he brought him near Babaji Mahashaya, holding him by the arm, and made him surrender at his feet. Baba Mahashaya said in a voice choked with emotion, "Radharani has—out of Her infinite kindness—bestowed this sublimest and sweetest *bhava* upon you. Retain it carefully and be happy. Vesh (outward form) alone will not do any good. You have to live according to this *bhava* in thought, word and deed. In *sakhi-bhava* one cannot even for a moment think of one's own happiness. You will have to

convert this *bhava* into *svabhava*, that is, you will have to make it completely your own, your natural disposition. Until this is done the *bhava* will not be permanent. The best way of doing this is constantly serving Radha-Krishna according to this *bhava*."

Navadwip Das then asked, "Now, what name should we give him?"

Baba said, "What name do you propose?"

"I wish that he should henceforth be called Lalita Dasi."

So he began to be called Lalita Dasi. Henceforth Jai Gopal was not Jai Gopal. He was Lalita Dasi in the true sense. He always dressed himself as a *gopi*, and was like a *gopi* in thought, word and deed.

THE CONVERSION OF KALA KUNJADAS

One day Babaji Mahashaya and his companions were invited for *mahaprasada* in the *kshetra* of Lala Babu. They reached there at 10 o'clock after circumambulating Jagannath's Temple and having the *darshan* of Jagannath and a number of other deities in the temples, which Mahaprabhu used to visit. Many people had already assembled in the *kshetra* to listen to their *kirtan*. The *kirtan* started. When it was at the highest pitch a Brahmin of Bhagalpura, who was about thirty years old, came and began to dance in the midst of the *kirtan*. The Brahmin had a staff in his right hand, a *ghanti*¹ in his left hand and a blanket on his shoulder. He was so absorbed in dancing that the blanket and the *ghanti* fell off, but he was quite unaware of it. Tears were flowing from his eyes so profusely that his chest was thoroughly drenched. After some time he became unconscious and fell upon the ground. The *kirtan*-

¹ A small metallic water-pot.

party began to dance around him. Still, for a long time he remained unconscious. Baba Mahashaya then made someone shout *Harinama* near his ears. That also did not have any effect. The manager of the *kshetra* said, "Baba this man has been here for a number of days. I know that he is so hard of hearing that even if you beat a drum on his ears he would not listen." Baba Mahashaya then put his hand upon his chest and shouted, "*Jai Nitai!*" As soon as he did this there was horripilation all over his body. Then he uttered a *mantra* into his ear. Every word of the *mantra* made his body tremble. Peace and happiness seemed to radiate from his face. As soon as the *mantra* was completed he stood up and began to dance and shout, "*Jai Nitai, Jai Nitai!*"

Everyone was surprised to hear him say, "*Jai Nitai!*" Baba Mahashaya gave him a loving embrace. He said with tears in his eyes and voice choked with emotion, "Guruji, I have forgotten one or two words of the *mantra*. Kindly let me hear the *mantra* again. Baba Mahashaya again whispered the *mantra* into his ear. It was clear that he could now hear the *mantra*.

The Brahmin began to live with Baba Mahashaya. After sometime Baba gave him *vesh* (Vaishnava *sannyasa*) and named him Kunjadas. He also deputed him for the service of the foot-print of Mahaprabhu inside the Temple of Jagannath. He served the foot-print with devotion, but he also went and served Babaji Mahashaya whenever possible. Sometimes he remained in his service throughout the night.

CHAPTER 21

DELIVERANCE OF JHANJAPITA MATH AND AFTER

One day Kishori Mohana Sena, the local subjudge and Babu Jagatchandra Roy, the local deputy magistrate came to Babaji Mahashaya. Kishori Babu said to him, "I beg to propose that you should have a Math of your own. It is not good that you should always be moving from one place to another and be dependent on others."

Babaji Mahashaya: What you call dependence, Kishori Babu, is really independence. I am not bound to a particular place and I can freely go where I like. If I own a Math it will not be possible for me to move about freely. I shall have to make proper arrangement for the Math before I think of going anywhere. Why should I take that botheration upon myself?

Kishori Babu: You tell us that devotional service is the highest *dharma*. It is not possible to attain the Lord as easily through any other means as through *seva* (service). What I actually want to propose will provide you with excellent opportunity for service. You see, there is a Math here, which was established by Sevadas Babaji, a *siddha* saint on the advice of his guru, Sri Narottama Das Thakura Mahashaya, the great saint and disciple of Sri Lokanath Goswami. The last in the disciplic succession of Narottama Thakura, who was the *sevait* of this Math, was Adhikari Krishna Das. Krishna Das is dead

and there is no one left to receive the property. All moveable property of the Math, including Radhakanta and other deities have been shifted to the police-office and are in their custody. If you agree to receive the Math I can do something about it. The Math is called 'Jhanjapita Math.' It is also called 'Virakta-siddha Ashram.'

Babaji Mahashaya: You are right when you say that *seva* is the highest *dharma*, but you know, one should be worthy of it. There are three kinds of *sadhakas* or servants: *asakta*, *virakta* and *anasakta*.

Asakta is one who is attached on account of ignorance to body, wife and children, wealth, name and fame. On account of this he carries with him a *vasanayukta-deha* (subtle body made of a bundle of unfulfilled desires of all kinds), which casts him into an unending cycle of births and deaths entailing all kinds of suffering. It is this *asakti* which Krishna has advised Arjuna to give up in the *Gita*.

Virakti is the renunciation of all those things that cause *asakti*. The *virakta* renounces the world and goes and lives in the forest, depending only on *madhukari*.

Anasakti is different from *asakti* and *virakti*. The *anasakta-purusha* lives in the world and performs his duties, but is not interested in the fruits of his actions. He lives amidst the objects that attract the senses, but remains unaffected by them like the lotus, that blooms in mud and water, but remains untouched by them. For him, sorrow and happiness, success and failure, profit and loss, favour and disfavour, honour and dishonour are the same. This means total self-surrender and complete absence of any desire for *atma-sukha* or happiness of the self. So long as there is any desire for *atma-sukha*, *seva* is not possible. I am neither *virakta* nor *anasakta*. I am *asakta* and therefore unfit for the Virakta-siddha Ashram, and for the *seva* it involves.

Kishori Babu and Jagacchandra Roy were not satisfied with whatever Babaji Mahashaya said in humility. They left in utter disappointment.

One day at about 10 o'clock in the morning Baba Mahashaya and his companions were going, dancing and singing as usual, to Radha-Kanta Math, where they were invited for *prasada*. At the same time Kishori Babu and Jagacchandra Babu were going to the office in a carriage. On seeing Baba Mahashaya they got down from the carriage. Baba Mahashaya said with a smile, "How are you?"

Kishori: By your grace I am well, but a doubt has crept into my mind, which makes me unhappy.

Babaji: Can you tell me what it is about?

Kishori: 'Kindly let me know if there is any difference between Sri Murti¹ and Bhagavan Himself.

Babaji: There is not the least difference. Those who talk of difference go to hell.

Kishori: What is your relationship with Krishna and Radha?

Babaji: "We are *dasi* (servants) of Radharani. Krishna is *pranavallabha* (life and soul) of Radha, so He is also our *pranavallabha*.

Kishori: This is what you say, but do you also feel it in your heart? Perhaps not, because you are going to Radha-Kanta Math for taking *prasada*, but your *pranavallabha* has been lying in *thana* (police-post), unattended and unfed for over a month. Day after tomorrow He will be auctioned along with the other properties of the Math. None knows in whose hands They will go and what Their fate will be. The very thought of it breaks my heart. But I wonder how you have all along been so indifferent to it?

¹ The form or deity of the Lord made of clay, metal, marble, or wood.

Baba Mahashaya could not remain unmoved. He burst into tears like a child and said, "I feel so helpless. I do not know what to do."

Kishori Babu said, "You do not have to do anything. You have only to give us your consent for what we do."

"You do what you like," said Babaji.

The same day, expecting the arrival of Sri Radhakanta, the main deity of Jhanjapita Math, Baba Mahashaya made necessary arrangements for the cleaning of the Math. The next day was *Basanta-panchami* festival¹ Baba Mahashaya was busy celebrating it at Jagannath Vallabha, when a policeman came to inform that the magistrate had ordered that he be given the sole possession of Jhanjapita Math and the deities be removed from the *thana*.

Babaji Mahashaya rushed immediately to the *thana* with some of his disciples. He was aggrieved to see that the image of Radhakanta was wearing only a *kaupina*,² while Radharani was lying without even a piece of cloth to cover Her body and the other small deities were lying jumbled together in a basket. Lalita Dasi quickly covered Radharani with her *ornhi*.³

Arrangements were made to carry the deities in right royal manner in a palanquin. A band-master came and offered to follow the palanquin with his band. Baba Mahashaya happily agreed to include the band in the royal procession, since he thought that it was sent by *Yogamaya*⁴ in the service of the Lord. The procession started with the *kirtan*-party performing in front of the palanquin and the band following

¹ On *Basanta-panchami* people worship the goddess of learning.

² Piece of cloth used as underwear.

³ Sheet of cloth worn by ladies to cover the upper portion of their body.

⁴ The goddess responsible for the enactment of the *lilas* of Radha-Krishna.

it along with a large number of devotees who had assembled there on hearing about the home-coming of the deities.

On reaching the Math the *abhisheka* (bathing ceremony) of the deities was duly performed. They were properly dressed and fed. People vied with one another in offering to Radhakanta different kinds of things, which He was fond of. Some brought sweets, some silken dresses, some scent, some flowers and other things.

THE DEITY CRAVES FOR THE FLUTE

Radhakanta said to Himself, "These people have given Me so many things, but no one has given Me a flute. I must go and beg for it somewhere else."

In Mati-mandapa-sahi there lived a *sadhu* of Ramayat Sampradaya. He had a Sri Murti of Balagopala, whom he loved intensely. Wherever he went he looked for something, which he could bring for Him. About a year before he had bought for Him a flute. He gave Him the flute in the hope that some day he would stand cross-legged holding it in His hands, and he would be blessed to see Him in that form. But Gopal did not fulfil his wish. He always reflected about it with great concern and disappointment. Radhakanta thought that He was the right person from whom to beg. So one night He sneaked out of the Math. He went to the *sadhu* while He was asleep, and putting His lotus hand upon his head said, "It's no use moaning about Gopal's indifference to the flute. Why not give the flute to Me?" The *sadhu* said with a start, while still in sleep, "Who are you? Where do you live?"

"My name is Radhakanta. I live in Jhanjapita Math," replied Radhakanta.

All of a sudden the *sadhu's* sleep broke and he began to see all round. Not finding anyone there he started for

Jhanjapita Math with the flute. He did not know the location of the Math and he could not inquire from anyone, because it was still dark and no one was seen stirring about. Suddenly a man appeared from the darkness and asked where he was going. He pointed the way and disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared. The *sadhu* wondered who that man could be. He went in the direction pointed out by him. Soon he reached the Math and knocked at the door. The door was opened. He saw Barha Baba Mahashaya sitting in front. He told him everything with tears of love flowing from his eyes. Baba Mahashaya also began to shed tears. He said, "Baba! You are fortunate. Radhakanta Himself went to you and begged for the flute." Just then the *mangala-arati* of Radhakanta started.

After *arati* the *sadhu* placed the flute in the hands of Radhakanta and said with a voice choked with emotion and eyes shedding tears of love, "My Lord! I am a sinner and the lowliest of the lowly. Still You came to me in the darkness of night, gave me Your *darshan* and asked for the flute. Kindly accept the flute and bless me with *bhakti*." He then placed two rupees before Babaji Mahashaya for the *khir-bhoga*¹ of Radhakanta and asked permission to leave. Baba Mahashaya hugged him lovingly before he left.

THE DEITY BEGS FOR BUTTER AND SUGAR-CANDY

Another day Radhakanta appeared before Mahim Chandra Das, a devotee who lived in Jhanjapita Math, in a dream and said, "Look here, I want that butter and sugar-candy be offered to Me every day. You should arrange for it." Mahim said, "I am poor. Why don't You ask Barha Babaji to arrange for it?" Radhakanta replied, "Barha Baba takes so

¹ Sweet prepared with milk, rice and sugar.

much trouble for Me. I should also do something for Myself." Next morning Mahim told Babaji Mahashaya about the dream. Both wept. But Babaji Mahashaya said, "Look Mahim, I can arrange for butter and sugar-candy, but since the Thakura has asked you for it, you should yourself make the arrangement." Mahim was penniless, but he begged and finally arranged for the *bhoga*.

One might wonder why the Lord begs things from His devotees, when His own *dhama*,¹ Vaikuntha, abounds in the sweetest and loveliest things, we cannot even dream of. It is because the offering made by the devotee, even if it be a *tulasi* leaf, is tinged with his love and therefore has for Him a taste and beauty with which anything that He possesses in Vaikuntha cannot compare. It is no surprise, therefore, that He does not feel shy in begging from His devotees.

MEETING WITH A CHRISTIAN PRIEST

Once an English man, who was a Christian priest, went to see Babaji Mahashaya. He, as usual, received him with a loving embrace and made him sit by his side. The priest was both surprised and impressed. After making some courteous inquiries he said, "May I know what your religion is?"

Babaji: In a very general way I would say that my religion is what you may know as Hindu religion. But amongst the Hindus there are five main different classes: Shakta, Shaiva, Ganapatya, Saura and Vaishnava. I am a Vaishnava.

Priest: Whom do you worship?

Babaji: We worship Radha-Krishna and Nitai-Gaura.

The priest then started narrating Krishna-*lila* with special reference to those parts of the *lila*, which he thought were

¹ Divine abode.

disgraceful. He described Krishna's stealing the butter of the *gopis*, His stealing away their clothes while they were bathing unclothed in the Yamuna River, His *rasa-lila* and other amorous pastimes with them in the Yamuna and the bowers of Vraja. He also described Krishna's killing of Putana and Vatsasura and other *lilas*.

He was describing and Baba Mahashaya was quietly listening. He was stunned and stupefied to see how from time to time Baba Mahashaya's body trembled like a tree stormed by tempest, hair stood erect on their ends like thorns and streams of tears incessantly flowed from his eyes. After he had described the *lilas* he began to point out the faults in Krishna's character. He said, "So you see, the God Whom you worship is a debauch, a liar, a thief and a killer." Still he did not see any change in the expressions of Baba Mahashaya. He was amazed. He said, "I said so much against your God and religion, but you were not angry. Instead you showed signs of ecstatic joy and blissfulness. Why so? If you say anything against my religion or Christ, I would feel very unhappy."

Baba replied, "Our Bhagavan is not only *purna* (perfect), but *purnatam* (perfection at its highest). Imperfection or any fault or vice cannot even touch Him. What appear to you as His faults are His embellishments; what appears as His weaknesses or imperfections are the very signs of His perfection, because He is essentially Love, and whatever He does is an expression of His love—love that is transcendental, pure and selfless. He says in *Padma Purana*: '*madbhaktanam vinodartham karomi vividhah kriyah*—Whatever I do, I do in order to please My devotees, and not for self-enjoyment.' He says in *Srimad Bhagavatam*: '*aham bhaktaparadhino hyasvatantra iva dvija*—I have no freedom. I am completely subjugated by My devotees.' He is so much under their subjection on account of their love that He can even lie or steal, or do anything that is

generally looked upon as immoral to please them. This is why He is so sweet and attractive. He would not be perfect if He were not so.

"Looked at from another point of view—the metaphysical point of view—however, He does not lie, when He actually seems to lie, because He is the essence of truth and what He says must be true. For instance, He seems to lie when after eating earth as a child, He says to Mother Yashoda that He did not eat it. Actually, He does not lie, because everything including the earth is already within Him. Who can say that the earth, which He seemed to eat, and in fact the whole earth planet, was not already in His mouth? Did not Ma Yashoda actually see it, when she asked Him to open His mouth? Similarly, how can He steal anything, when there is nothing that does not already and truly belong to Him? How can He be accused of seduction or adultery in His amorous pastimes with the *gopis*, when there is not a single woman that does not already and truly belong to Him, of whom He is not the *parama-pati* (Supreme Husband)? Lying and stealing, etc., are only His *prema-lila* or love-pastimes."

Priest: Well, that may be as you say, but what will you say about Krishna's killings? You regard cow-slaughter as the worst sin, yet you regard Krishna, the killer of cows as your God. Our Christ never harmed anyone. He even sacrificed himself for the sake of others.

Babaji: Christ was truly a *mahapurusha*, who was specially favoured by God. We shall not hesitate even in saying that he was an incarnation of God. It is against our religion to calumniate any other religion or person. But you are not right when you call Krishna a killer. Krishna did not kill or do harm to anyone. When the demons started coming to Vraja in various forms and oppressing innocent men, women and

children, Krishna demolished their devilish existence and gave them *mukti* (freedom from bondage of *Maya*). He never killed any cow. On the other hand He was the supreme protector of cows. But when the demons came in the form of a bull or a calf He killed them, and by killing delivered them from that sinful existence.

Priest: I would like to know whether according to you, God can be worshipped in some particular form or in any form that one may choose?

Babaji: God is infinite. He has infinite forms. All the things that exist are the various forms of God. There is difference only in the degree in which God is manifest in them. In His incarnations He is manifest more fully than in any other thing, though the incarnations also differ in the degree in which He is particularly manifest in them. But all His incarnations are His forms. There is no difference between Krishna, Allah, Khuda or Christ. For God all religions are His religions and He favours all those who love Him, irrespective of their caste and creed. Our Jagannath Deva is worshipped by the followers of different religions in different forms. The Buddhists worship Him as Buddha, the Brahma Samajis as Omkara, while others worship Him as Narayana, Dvarakanath or Nandanandana (Krishna, the son of Nanda), and He favours them all accordingly. Even the Mohammedans are not denied His favour. The *shastras* say that He also accepts the food prepared by a Mohammedan.

The priest was fully satisfied. He said, "I have no more doubts. I am convinced that Vaishnava religion is the highest religion. I have travelled so much and met so many saints, but no one has impressed me so much. I feel that after meeting you I am not only richer in my knowledge of Vaishnava religion, but of religion as such."

The priest then placed a ten rupee note before Babaji Mahashaya and said, "I shall be obliged if you kindly offer some food to Jagannath Deva on my behalf."

Navadwip Das said, "Give the note to me, for he does not touch money."

The priest gave the note to Navadwip Das. Baba Mahashaya asked the devotees to add fifteen more rupees to it. A number of delicious things were offered to Jagannath and the *prasada* was given to the priest when he went there again the next day. He took off his hat and bowed down to *prasada* and ate it with great relish.

The priest liked Babaji Mahashaya so much that he continued to go and meet him almost every day as long as he lived in Puri.

BABA MAHASHAYA ASSAULTED BY A MAN

Once Barha Babaji Mahashaya was going, singing and dancing along with a number of devotees, to Jagannath Temple, after circumambulating the *samadhi* of Vijai Krishna Goswami Mahashaya on the bank of Narendra Sarovar. As soon as he reached Sudarshanavallabha, the old house of Vijai Krishna Goswami, he lay prostrate on the ground and began to roll and weep. At that time there came a disciple of Vijai Krishna Goswami Mahashaya and began to kick him right and left. Babaji Mahashaya's companions kept on looking and began to weep in utter helplessness. They could not say anything to the man for fear of incurring the displeasure of Babaji Mahashaya. But Babaji Mahashaya stood up and began to dance in ecstasy, and embrace the assaulting man. At that time there was such effulgence of light from his face and body that his companions could hardly look at him. He held the man by the arm, and dancing and singing in a state

of trance, entered the Simhadvara of Jagannath Temple. The man, however, not satisfied with what he had done so far, began to throw dust on the face of Babaji Mahashaya with both hands. While Babaji Mahashaya's other companions continued looking at him angrily but helplessly, Nityasvarupa Brahmachari could not tolerate this. He held the man's arm and began to reproach him for his outlandish and barbarous behaviour, but Babaji Mahashaya reproached him in turn. He said soothing words to the man and sent him home after giving him a loving embrace.

A *mahapurusha*, who is by nature benevolent and forgiving, does not take anyone's offense. However, the Lord, Who loves His pure devotees more than His own self, cannot forgive a person, who does any harm to them. As the Lord wished it, therefore, the man developed high fever that very night. He experienced such excruciating pain in those very parts of his body, which corresponded to the parts of Babaji Mahashaya's body he had struck, that he could not sleep the whole night. The fire of repentance burnt his whole body. The next morning he went running and fell at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya and said, "I am a great sinner. I have committed a great offense at your feet. God has therefore punished me, and I have been suffering miserably ever since I returned home yesterday. I do not know what my fate is going to be, if you do not forgive me." So saying he began to weep bitterly.

Babaji Mahashaya clasped him close to his heart and said, "I can say on oath that I have not taken any offense on account of your behaviour. You take *Harinama* and be at peace."

But the man would not be convinced and would not stop weeping and wailing. Baba Mahashaya then took pity on him

and said, "Look here, if you really feel that you have done some wrong, then go and submit to your guru. It is the guru, who feels offended if his disciple does any wrong, and he alone can forgive him. If he is pleased and forgives, no one else can do any harm to him, not even Krishna. Has not Sanatana Goswami said in his *Guru-vandana*:

*'If Krishna is displeased, the guru can protect,
If guru is displeased, Krishna cannot protect.'*

When one surrenders to the guru, the guru takes him under his protection. He alone can favour or disfavour him, punish or reward him, no one else."

So, the disciple went to the *samadhi* of Vijai Krishna Goswami Mahashaya, lay himself prostrate before it and wept and prayed. Afterwards, everyday before going to the sea for bath, he also went to Babaji Mahashaya and requested him for pardon.

VANCHANIDHI'S INITIATION IN DREAM

One morning Babaji Mahashaya was sitting in Jhanjapita Math before Sri Radhakanta Deva, surrounded by a number of devotees, when a man about thirty-five years old, entered the Math and looking at him attentively from head to feet, cried out, "This is he, this is he!" and fell unconscious on the ground. The devotees tried by various means to revive his consciousness but failed. Then Babaji Mahashaya smilingly touched his forehead with his left hand. The touch made his body tremble. Tears streamed out of his eyes and drenched his cheeks. His face became radiant. It was apparent that the fortunate person was beyond himself with joy on finding something precious and adorable, which he was holding close to his heart. When he did not regain outer consciousness for a long time, Babaji Mahashaya was persuaded by the devotees

to plant his foot over his chest. Immediately after receiving the touch of his foot, the man opened his eyes and holding the foot close to his heart with both hands like a child, began to weep. Baba spoke kind words to soothe him and asked why he wept. He narrated the following story:

"About ten or twelve days ago there was *kirtan* in my village. During *kirtan* I felt that my life was useless without a guru. I began to say, 'Most merciful Lord! Will I remain uninitiated all my life? I am too skeptical. I have not yet been able to find a guru of my choice. I will never find one, if you do not have mercy on me. So, be merciful my Lord.' After *kirtan* I came back home and slept. I saw a dream at night. I saw that a tall and dark colored *mahatma* came to me laughing and smiling and said, 'Why worry my boy? Nitai Chand is merciful on you. Tomorrow at night you sleep at some clean place with a clean mind and pure heart, and you will get your guru.' After saying this the *mahatma* departed. In my anxiety to find him my sleep broke. I opened my eyes and saw that nobody was there. The day had already dawned. I began to wonder whether some *mahapurusha* had already shown mercy on me or it was all imagination. The next night I slept in a small room outside my house, on a mat with clothes that were properly washed, and with a mind wholly occupied with the thought of the *mahapurusha* I had seen in the dream. That night I did not eat anything. In the last part of the night you appeared before me, planted your foot on my forehead and said, 'Vanchanidhi, my son! I take upon myself all your sins of this life and the past, and give you the richest treasure of the spiritual world. Cherish the treasure and be fearless.' Then you embraced me and..." With this Vanchanidhi's throat was choked with emotion and he began to weep. Baba Mahashaya tried to calm him down and said, "Go on, let me hear the full story of Nitai Chand's mercy on you. It is so sweet and soul-

stirring." Vanchanidhi continued, "You gave me a *mantra* in my right ear and stood before me. I fell prostrate before you in obeisance. You said, 'Child, cherish with care the treasure you have got. I am going to Puri. We shall meet again at proper time.' And then you disappeared. I got up in a mixed state of deep anguish and delight. My heart was filled with joy on receiving your uncaused and undeserved mercy, but there was no end to my anguish, because you disappeared suddenly without giving me an opportunity to speak and open my heart to you, and I could not fully remember the *mantra* you gave me. You told me that you were going to Puri, but I thought, how could I find you in Puri, where there were so many *mahatmas*? I passed three days in deep anguish. On the third night the *mahapurusha*, whom I had seen before you in a dream, again appeared and said, 'Oh you! You have got what you had cherished. What makes you unhappy now?' I said, 'Prabhu, I got it all by your kindness, but I have forgotten what I got. You must do something about it.' I burst into tears as I said this. Then he gave me a piece of paper and said, 'Look here, this paper contains the *mantra* he gave you, written in his own hand. You can now go and find him in Jhanjapita Math in Puri. Beyond this I will not tell you anything.' So saying he disappeared. I have been looking for you for the last two days in Puri and now I have found you. It is you, and no one else, who gave me the *mantra*."

Baba Mahashaya said, "You have been blessed by Nitai Chand, not me. He has only made me a tool."

"In my knowledge you yourself are Nitai Chand. Otherwise how could you be so kind to a fallen soul like me," replied Vanchanidhi.

Baba said, "Pooh! You should not say like that. I am not fit to be called even the servant of the servant of Nitai Chand. But His ways are inscrutable. He can maké even a

wooden doll work for Him. Well, where is that paper containing the *mantra* supposed to be written by me?"

"Here it is" said Vanchanidhi and he gave the paper to Babaji Mahashaya.

Baba was surprised to see it. The devotees sitting around were also surprised. They said in one voice, "Baba! The handwriting is undoubtedly yours!" They said to Vanchanidhi, "Baba! Blest are you to have received the mercy of Nitai Chand. Bless us so that we may receive but a small part of the mercy showered on you."

In the meantime came Navadwip Das Baba, smiling as usual. As soon as Vanchanidhi saw him, he sprang up and said, "It is he, it is he, who is my saviour, my protector, who first came to me in my dream, and who gave me that paper containing the *mantra*. It is he, who goes about in search of fallen souls, whose heart weeps for fallen creatures like me. Whosoever he may be, he is not human, but a celestial being, who has been sent by God to deliver the fallen souls from bondage." So saying he fell prostrate at his feet and began to weep.

Navadwip Das was amazed. He said, "Why, what is the matter? I do not understand." One of the devotees told him everything. The story brought tears in his eyes. He clasped Vanchanidhi close to his heart and began to dance in ecstasy and sing the glory of the benign and the most merciful Lord.

Baba Mahashaya said to Vanchanidhi, "Come! Let me also embrace you and be blessed, because you are specially favoured by the Lord." So saying he embraced him. The devotees shouted aloud with joy, "*Nityananda bol!*, *Gaurahari bol!*"

Vanchanidhi stayed in the Math for a few days, after which Baba Mahashaya sent him back to his village.

PLAYING 'HOLI' WITH BOYS

Once Baba Mahashaya caught cold. He developed pain in the chest and the back. Maguni Misra, the famous physician was called. He prescribed a number of medicines and warned the devotees attending upon him that proper care must be taken and he must at all cost be prevented from water and wind. Accordingly the attendants closed all the windows of the room, tied a piece of flannel round his chest, dressed him properly and made him lie down on bed.

It was the month of *Phalgun* (February-March), which is famous all over the country for Holi.¹ So, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, there came to the Math about fifteen boys armed with *pichakaris*.² They went to the door of Baba Mahashaya's room and said, "Baba Mahashaya! Please come out, we want to play Holi with you."

Baba took off the clothes he was wearing and threw away the bandage of flannel and came out. The attendants and the other devotees tried to prevent him but in vain. He got the *kunda* (small pond) in the Math filled with colored water. Lalita Dasi, Kusum-manjari Dasi and seven or eight other devotees of the Math were also asked to join the play. Each of them was supplied with a *pichakari*. They were all arrayed along with the boys on one side, while Baba Mahashaya alone remained on the other side. The play started. Baba Mahashaya proved much stronger than his opponents. He was, no doubt, completely drenched from head to foot, because so many *pichakaris* were discharged on him simultaneously. But he could manage to throw them several yards back with his single *pichakari*. The most wonderful thing was that each of

¹ A festival in which colored water is sprinkled by people on one another.

² Pipes like large syringes for throwing out colored water.

the opponents felt that Baba Mahashaya had singled him out and was directing all his attacks on him alone. Each, therefore, found it impossible to stand before him for long. Still the boys would not own defeat. They said that they suffered a handicap, since all of them had to fill their *pichakarīs* from the same *kunda*. Therefore they were supplied with sufficient number of buckets filled with colored water, so that they might fill and refill them conveniently from a separate bucket in groups of two. But the result was the same.

The play continued till 5 o'clock, after which the boys were served with sweets and other kinds of *prasada*. Baba Mahashaya passed some time with them in humorous conversation, laughing and making them laugh, before they left.

After the boys had gone, the devotees, who were so far lost in the play, came to their own. They became anxious about Baba Mahashaya's health. They also felt guilty, because in utter forgetfulness, they had themselves been throwing cold water on him for two hours. Speedily they changed his clothes and made him rest. At nine o'clock Baba Mahashaya asked Lalita Dasi, "Is there any *mahaprasada*?"

Lalita: The physician has warned against *mahaprasada*.

Babaji: I did not inquire about that. Tell me if you have *mahaprasada*.

Lalita: I have, but it has become cold.

Babaji: Do not bother. Bring it!

Baba Mahashaya took *mahaprasada* and slept. The next morning came the physician. He saw Baba Mahashaya sitting outside bare-bodied. He said to Lalita Dasi vituperatively, "Didn't I ask you yesterday to take proper care and keep Baba Mahashaya always covered with woolen clothes?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "I was very careful yesterday. Today I am well. Therefore you see me sitting like this."

Physician: That's all right, but you see, one cannot be

cured in a day. By slight exposure you can fall ill again.

Babaji: I feel very hot, because I took hot things yesterday.

Physician: Let me feel your pulse.

Immediately on feeling the pulse the physician said, "Very strange! I did not give you any hot medicine yesterday. I gave you only three pills, which could not cause so much heat. What diet did you take yesterday?"

Baba Mahashaya: I took *mahaprasada*. Having been very busy I could not take all the pills. I took only one pill. Even then I got well.

Navadwip Das then broke in saying, "Misra Mahashaya, should I tell you about all the care he took yesterday? You have only to look at the walls of the Math and his body. You will still find signs of the *Holi-lila* in which he revelled with the boys, from three to five o'clock yesterday. About twenty pitchers of cold water must have been thrown on him. Then from six o'clock to nine he performed *kirtan* in the open courtyard, in which he remained standing all the time. At ten he took Jagannath's *mahaprasada* and slept with all the windows of the room open."

The physician was taken aback. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "I am convinced that you are a *nitya-parikara* (eternal associate) of Mahaprabhu. It is meaningless and futile to treat you. Please forgive me for the offense I have committed by acting as your physician."

Baba Mahashaya: Misraji, you are a Brahmin and a Misra Brahmin, the caste in which Mahaprabhu appeared. Therefore I am the servant of your servant. Please bless me that when Mahaprabhu makes this body the instrument of any *lila*. I do not develop a conceit. Would you permit me to bathe today?

Physician: I have already said, I do not regard you a human being. You can do as you like.

Baba Mahashaya then said to Lalita Dasi, "Misraji has permitted me to take bath. So, arrange for the bath." He took his bath and went to Jagannath Temple for *darshan* performing *sankirtan* on the way as usual.

CHAPTER 22

THE JOURNEY TO CUTTACK

Sri Anandachandra Brahma, a disciple of Babaji Mahashaya came to invite him to his house in Cuttack. He wanted that only four or five persons should go with him, but he could not say so. Baba Mahashaya said to Lalita Dasi, "I have to go to Cuttack today."

Lalita asked, "Who will go with you?"

"Not many people" said Baba, "Only four or five persons will do."

Ananda Babu was happy to hear this. He thought that his benign and always mercifully inclined Gurudeva had come to know his mind and had planned accordingly.

In the evening Baba left for the station. He was followed by almost everybody in the Math, except an old Babaji, and a number of people from outside. On reaching the station he was told that the train was late by an hour and a half. So he went and sat under a tree and said, "Those of you who want to go to Cuttack with me may come to this side." Everyone moved towards him. Baba Mahashaya left four or five persons out of them for *seva* in the Math and decided to take the remaining twenty-eight persons with him. This naturally caused anxiety to Ananda Babu, because he thought he would have to pay railway fare for all those persons and make arrangements for their food and lodging. He was thinking like

this when Baba Mahashaya spread a piece of cloth on the ground and said, "All of you give some *bhiksha* (alms) to me." Everyone started giving. Twenty-three rupees were collected.

THE BABU FROM MADRAS

Baba gave the money to a stranger, who was going to purchase his ticket, and asked him to purchase for him as many tickets for Cuttack as could be purchased with that amount. The stranger, a passenger from Madras, looked at Baba with surprise, but took the money and went. Half an hour elapsed, yet he did not return. Everyone became anxious. Kunja Babu said to Baba Mahashaya, "Baba, do you think he will return? He will not. You gave the money to an absolutely unknown man. If you had given it to one of us the tickets would have been brought by now and we would have been in the train."

Baba Mahashaya said ironically, "Yes, I made a mistake. He was completely unknown and you are all very well known. But would you let me know what you mean by known and unknown? Do you think you know a man when you come in contact with his bodily form? If that is what you mean by knowing a person, I would ask, do you know yourself? Do you know who you are, where you came from, where you will go and what exactly is your *svarupa* (real self)?"

Kunja Babu said, "Yes, I know that I am Kunja Bihari Roy. I am born of my parents. I have come here from my native place on service, and I shall go back there after my retirement."

"If this is what you are," said Baba Mahashaya, "What will happen to you after death? Will you still exist? You now know yourself as the son of your parents, the father of your children, the husband of your wife. But the very people whom

you now call your father, your son and your wife will immediately remove you from their house, take you to the cremation ground and burn you. Kunja Babu—as you know him—will be reduced to ashes. Your real *svarupa* is that you are a ray of Govinda. So long as that ray remains in the body it is regarded as pure and alive, and the worldly relationships have a meaning. As soon as the ray is withdrawn, the body becomes impure and is demolished and the relationships cease to have any meaning. We are all rays of Govinda. Our relationships with one another are based on our relationship with Govinda, and our real knowledge of one another is based on that relationship. Apart from that we are all unknown to one another.

“We are all like dolls in the hands of Govinda. He makes us dance as He wishes. He gave us the money, took it back and gave it to some one else. Perhaps He wanted to fulfil some need of the person to whom He gave. Why should we worry or grumble about it? As for myself, I do not have any work of my own, which makes my visit to Cuttack necessary. If Govinda wants he will take me there, otherwise not.”

Kunja Babu felt ashamed. He felt all the more ashamed, when the next moment he saw the Madrasi Babu, the unknown passenger from Madras, returning with the tickets. He placed thirty tickets before Baba Mahashaya and made obeisance to him with great respect. When everybody had taken his seat in the train, the Madrasi Babu said to Baba Mahashaya, “Baba, where do you live?”

Babaji: Govinda had kept me for some time in Jagannath Dham, now He is taking me to Cuttack. He alone knows when He would take me where and with what purpose.

Madrasi Babu: I am a foreigner and a stranger to you. I wonder how you trusted me with the money. This kind

of behaviour is not possible for an ordinary man. I believe that you are not an ordinary person.

Baba Mahashaya: You can say that I am not an ordinary man, because I do not perform my duty as a man. Man is not born only to eat and drink like animals. He is born to do *bhajan*.

Madrasi Babu: You can say whatever you like. I am convinced that you are a *mahapurusha*. Kindly let me know if there is any means by which a worldly man like me can realize God?

Babaji: You are a humble servant of the Lord. Always keep that in mind and do your duty towards your wife and children and others, regarding them also as the servants of the Lord. Never let egoism enter your mind. If you always keep the Lord in the centre of your life, you will find that the world and all the things that belong to it, themselves become means of God-realization.

The Madrasi Babu continued to ask question after question. Baba Mahashaya was replying and he was listening with rapt attention till the train stopped at Cuttack. As the train stopped he fell at the feet of Baba Mahashaya, weeping like a child and said, "Baba Maharaja, by your grace my worldly ties are cut asunder, and peace reigns in my heart. Now bless me so that life after life I may remain a devout servant of your holy feet and serve God." Baba Mahashaya blessed him by giving him a loving embrace. Everyone got down at the Cuttack station. The Madrasi Babu held a ticket for Calcutta, but he also got down with them.

Was it only to attract and bless this unknown person that Baba Mahashaya asked him to purchase the tickets and not any of his own men? It would not be a surprise if it were so. For his ways were inscrutable and there was no means that he could not adopt for delivering a soul from bondage. In fact,

this was the only purpose for which he went about from place to place, dancing and singing the Name of the Lord.

As soon as Baba Mahashaya came out of the station Ananda Babu engaged a carriage to take him to his house. Baba said, "Ananda, you go home. I will go to your house some other time, not just now."

Ananda said, "But there is no one else in Cuttack with whom you are acquainted. Where will you go at this time, when it is already night and what will you eat?"

"No worry about that Ananda so long as there is the water of the Kathjuri river to drink and the trees under which we can sleep."

So they slept for the night in a place adjoining the station. Next morning they started singing and dancing for some place, which they did not know, but which Nitai Chand knew. They were about thirty persons. Two persons with *khol* went in front and behind them went Baba Mahashaya and others, all dancing and singing:

*"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."*

They were going along the river bank. Slowly their absorption in *kirtan* increased. They began to sing and dance in frenzied ecstasy. The new style of their *kirtan* attracted other people also and the *sankirtan* crowd swelled more and more in numbers.

THE HOUSE HAUNTED BY A GHOST

At about 8:30 a.m. a man asked Sri Bhima Chandra Sinha, one of the members of the *sankirtan*-party, "Where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular. We shall go and stay wherever the Lord finds a place for us," said Bhima Chandraji.

Another man, who was listening said humorously, "Why not ask them to stay in the ghost-house. It is always vacant for them."

Baba Mahashaya heard this, and welcoming the idea he asked the man, "Where is that house, would you tell us?"

Then the man became very serious and said, "Going along this road you will find at some distance the house of Tinkori Babu, the famous advocate. Just in front of his house is a double-storied building belonging to Krishna Palit. That is called ghost-house, because it is actually haunted by a ghost."

Baba Mahashaya cheerfully proceeded in that direction. On finding that house he asked Hridaya Narain, a cloth-merchant, whose shop was near by, "Could you get the key of this house and open it so that we may live in it for some time?"

Hridaya Narain said in dismay, "Maharaja! This house is the haunt of ghosts. No one can stay in it."

"Yes, that is why we insist on staying in this house."

Hridaya Narain brought the key and opened the house. The party entered the house. They performed *kirtan* in each room and also over the flat roof. After *kirtan* they occupied the different rooms in groups. The house, which was dreaded by everyone, and which none dared even to pass by, was now fully occupied. The news spread all over the town. Crowds of people began to come out of curiosity to see what was happening. They saw that everyone was in cheerful mood and nothing untoward had happened. Some of them said ironically, "Well, nothing has happened till now, but let the night come. We have seen many brave people, even many *ojhas* (exorcists), who came to live here out of bravado but

went back roughend and humbled." Some said, "The looks of this tall Babaji arouse devotion in the heart. He seems to be very exalted. What can the ghost do to him?" Others retorted, "Whosoever he may be, he will also have to quit the house soon."

Hridaya Narain Babu was quick enough to arrange for provisions for the party. Cooking was going on, when Krishna Babu, the owner of the house came. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "Maharaja! If you permit, I can arrange for some other place, where you may shift. This house is infested by a ghost, who does not let anyone live here. You are Vaishnavas. If any harm is done to you, I will have committed an offense for not advising you not to live in it."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Krishna Babu, you need not worry. We are also ghosts. Are we not made up of *pancha-bhuta*? (five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether). What can one *bhuta* (ghost) do against thirty?"

Crowds continued to come and go. Most people came to see what the ghost was doing. But they saw that in one room Baba Mahashaya was singing and the others were repeating what he sang. There was no sign of fear or worry on their faces. Some said, "Let a couple of days pass, then we shall see what happens."

Kirtan continued till ten o'clock at night, after which everyone took some *prasada*, brought by Hridaya Narain, and slept.

Next morning again crowds started coming. Most people came to see what had happened at night, but were surprised to find that everything was normal and *kirtan* was going on as before. At about eight o'clock, when the *kirtan* was over, Hridaya Narain came to invite them for *darshan* of his deity named Vinoda Bihari. Baba Mahashaya and his party went to Hridaya Babu's house, performed *sankirtan* before Vinoda

Bihari and took *prasada*. Hridaya Babu requested Baba Mahashaya to perform *ashtaprahara-kirtan*¹ at his house the next day. Baba Mahashaya readily agreed.

Hridaya Babu said, "Kindly let me know what arrangements have to be made for *ashtaprahara-kirtan*?"

Baba said, "No special arrangements are necessary. Only five pitchers filled with water, one *tulasi* plant and one or two pictures of the deities will be required."

All arrangements were made. That evening Baba Mahashaya performed *adhivas-kirtan*² at Hridaya Babu's place till eleven p.m. *Ashtaprahara-kirtan* started next morning and continued till morning on the following day. The *kirtan* was going on in front of Sri Radha-Vinoda, and they were singing:

"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."

Everyone was singing and dancing with great enthusiasm and zest, and floating, as it were, in an ocean of bliss as he sang and danced. The *kirtan* released such a current of devotion that crowds of people, both Hindus and Muslims, were automatically drawn and began to sing and dance.

Baba Mahashaya had divided his party into groups. Each group came by turn and performed *kirtan* for three hours, but Baba himself had been singing continuously since morning. It was now twelve o'clock. He came out and sat in the adjoining hall, where a large number of people had been sitting. He engaged himself in talks with them. His only purpose was to impress upon them that human life was precious and was meant only for *bhajan*. People heard him with rapt attention.

¹ Non-stop *kirtan* for twenty-four hours.

² Ceremonious *kirtan* prior to *ashtaprahara-kirtan*.

Baba was so absorbed in talks that he lost consciousness of time and continued talking for long. His companions got anxious about him, since it was time for *prasada* and he had not taken anything since morning, but no one had the courage to go near him in the crowd and ask him to take *prasada*.

It was at this time that an elderly lady came with her face half-veiled. In her hands she had a bowl full of milk and a dish containing sweets. Her eyes were wet. She looked like mother Yashoda, the very image of motherly affection. Undaunted and unabashed, she proceeded step by step towards Babaji Mahashaya. The crowd looked at her with surprise and respect, and made way for her to pass. On reaching Baba Mahashaya, she kept the dish on one side, held Baba Mahashaya's head with the left-hand and brought the bowl of milk close to his lips with the right-hand to make him drink. Baba Mahashaya drank like a child. After that, she picked up the dish and with her own hand made him eat all the sweets one by one. Until then she had acted like one under the spell of a charm, totally conscious of what she was doing, but unconscious of her surroundings. Suddenly she came to her own. She looked round and was surprised to see herself in the midst of the crowd. Shyly she pulled her veil longer. But she did not know how she had come there alone, and how to go back through the crowd. The people bowed down to her with reverence. Someone said, "Ma! We are making way for you. You can go as easily as you came. You are *Jagat-Ma* (Mother of the whole world), we are all your children. Don't be shy." She slowly went out of the crowd into the courtyard and stood before Radha-Vinoda. Someone asked Baba Mahashaya, "Baba! Who is this nice lady? We never saw a lady so much absorbed in her *bhava*."

Baba Mahashaya said, "She is the wife of Sri Pyari Mohana Dutt, who lives in Manik Ghosh Bazaar. She is always in

bhava. She is the very image of *vatsalya-rasa*.¹ She has a deity of Govinda Deva in her home. The kind of *vatsalya-bhava* she has towards Govinda is found only in Vraja. I have also never seen a woman like her. She has parental affection towards us also. We should feel proud to have a mother like her."

Just then came Pyari Babu. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "Baba, the moment your mother heard that you had not taken anything so long, she came rushing with food. I tried to arrange for a conveyance, but she did not wait. How strange! She often forgets her path back to home, when she goes to bathe in the river, but she came straight to you through a path she had never seen or known, and she came so swiftly that I could not keep pace with her. Besides, she is by nature very modest and bashful, and always avoids company. But she came all the way through Balu Bazaar and entered the crowd here utterly unmindful of what others will think or say." Everyone was surprised to hear this, but Baba Mahashaya laughed and said, "Ma took a plunge into the ocean of *vatsalya-rasa* and a current of the ocean swept her here."

Baba Mahashaya did not say this figuratively. It is true that one who takes a plunge into the ocean of *prema-bhakti*, whatever be his *bhava*, whether *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya* or *madhura*, he does not need a guide to take him to the destination. For *prema* is the essence of *Hladini-shakti* of Krishna, which includes *Samvit-shakti* or the potency of knowledge. So it knows its way. *Prema* is also transcendental. It transcends *Loka-dharma* (the rules and regulations of society) and *Veda-dharma* (the duties as laid down in the Vedas). It is no surprise, therefore, that the current of *bhava*, which brought the lady to Baba Mahashaya, made her oblivious of the world and she darted towards him like an

¹ Parental sentiments in *bhakti*.

arrow, unmindful of what others would think about her behaviour.

One might wonder what made Babaji Mahashaya submit to her and behave like a child before so many persons. The answer is obvious. It was the lady's *prema*, which made him so. *Prema* is so powerful that it makes even Krishna dance as it chooses. In *Chaitanya Charitamrita* (*Antya-lila*, 3.18.17) it is stated:

*"krishnere nachaya prema bhaktere nachaya
apane nachaya—time nachey ek thanya.*

—*Prema* makes Krishna dance, it makes the devotee dance, and it dances itself—the three dance at one and the same time."

One day Babaji Mahashaya decided to go out on *nagara-kirtan*. At four o'clock in the evening many people gathered at his place. A devotee decorated him with flowers. He started singing and dancing. His voice rang and his body trembled in deep emotion. As he went from one lane to another more and more people came and joined him. Hundreds of men sang and danced, and clapped together. This was a new thing in the history of Cuttack. Never before the people of Cuttack had witnessed this style of *kirtan*. The most important thing about the *kirtan* was its *bhava*. The *bhava* of the *kirtan* was so sweet, so heart-melting, that whosoever heard it was forcibly drawn to it. As soon as the *kirtan* approached a particular locality, the people first watched it through the windows and from the flat roofs of their houses, but the next moment they were themselves seen singing and dancing in the procession like others. Gradually it became dark. Though it was a moon-lit night, many people came out with *mashals* (big torches lit with oil), which made the procession look more attractive.

A wave of *ananda* (bliss), such as was never experienced

before, swept the entire city. Every one said, "Oh! This is unique, this is unearthly, this gives us a foretaste of what spiritual life as promised by Vaishnavism really is. There is nothing in this world, not even the best of all the pleasures it can offer, that can compare with it." This firmly laid the seeds of their ultimate baptism into Vaishnavism. This was Barha Babaji Mahashaya's way of baptizing people. He did not do it so much by telling them what spiritual life in *bhakti* is, as by making them feel it through the current of *bhava* which his *kirtans* released.

The *kirtan*-party went through many parts of the city and returned to its place at about 11 p.m., when everyone took *mahaprasada* and slept.

As Baba Mahashaya was lying, Lalita Dasi was fanning him. He suddenly asked her, "Lalita, are you frightened?"

"No, why? What is the matter?"

"Did you not see someone on the stairs going to the roof?"

"I did not, but now that you say I see a lady with beautiful long hair going upstairs. Who is she? And why is she here at night?"

"She has been living in this house for a long time, but now after seeing me, she is leaving it for good."

"Then is she a ghost?"

"Yes, it is she, who has been terrorizing and tormenting people all these days."

"Did she have any talk with you?"

"I need not tell you all about that, but she prayed for her deliverance and by Nitai's grace she has been delivered from this *yon*i. While going, she said, 'I would have left this house the very day you came, but I did not because I thought I never found such company and shall never find it again. So I remained here for some time to

benefit from your company. Today I take your leave.”

“She must have become a ghost on account of some *aparadha*.¹ What *aparadha* had she committed?”

“She had committed many sins, but no *aparadha*. That is why she was delivered from this *yon*i so easily.”

MEETING WITH SWAMI KESHAVANANDA

One day in the afternoon a gentleman came to Babaji Mahashaya and said, “A Swamiji has come from Kashi. He wants to meet you.”

Baba Mahashaya said with a start, “Where is he? Let us go to him.”

The man took Baba Mahashaya to the house of Banbihari Babu, where the Swami was staying. After they had exchanged usual courtesies, Swamiji started asking questions.

Swamiji: Gauranga Mahaprabhu gave up *shikha*,² *sutra*³ and put on orange-colored clothes, when he took *sannyasa* from Keshava Bharati. He never had *tilaka* on His forehead and *kanthi* round His neck. How is it then that in your Sampradaya white dress, *shikha*, *sutra*, *kanthi* and *tilaka* are worn?

Babaji: Sri Gauranga Deva is no other than Bhagavan Krishna Himself. The *jiva* cannot imitate His conduct. He should follow the rules of conduct, which He has laid down for them. It is because Gauranga Mahaprabhu did not want the people to develop any misgiving in this connection that He brought His Sampradaya, under the Sampradaya of Madhvacharya. There are four recognized Sampradayas—the

¹ An offense committed against the Lord, His Names, or the Vaishnavas.

² Tuft of hair overgrown on the crown of the head.

³ Sacred thread.

Sampradayas of Madhvacharya, Ramanuja, Vishnuswami and Nimbaditya. In all these Sampradayas, *shikha*, *sutra*, *kanthi*, *tilaka* and white dress are worn.

Swamiji: The *upasyadeva* (God to be worshipped) in Madhva Sampradaya is Narayana. Then why do you worship Radha-Govinda?

Babaji: Mahaprabhu taught the *raganuga* way of *bhakti*, according to which Krishna-*bhajan* is done under the guidance of the *parikaras* (eternal associates) of Krishna in Vraja. The *gopis* of Vraja worshipped Narayana as God and prayed that He might bless them with the attainment of the lotus feet of Krishna. Therefore, in *raganuga* way of *bhajan* we have to accept Narayana as a medium for Krishna-realization. We do not in fact disregard any recognized manifestation of the Lord, but pray to each for the boon of Krishna-realization. When Mahaprabhu went on pilgrimage to the South, He visited the temples of different gods, and prayed to them to grant the boon for the attainment of Krishna, the Lord of His heart.

Swamiji: You say that you follow the precepts of Gauranga Mahaprabhu. But Mahaprabhu did not ask you to worship Him. Why do you worship Him?

Babaji: Although Mahaprabhu did not ask us to worship Him, we worship Him, because Nityananda Prabhu, Advaita Prabhu, and Gadadhara Pandit Goswami, Who are non-different from Him, ask us to worship Him. And we worship Nityananda because Gauranga Mahaprabhu asks us to worship Him.

Swamiji: Well, what do you think is the easiest path for realizing God?

Babaji: The easiest path is *bhakti*. Bhagavan is bound by *bhakti*, not by any other path.

Swamiji: Doesn't the *Gita* say that He is bound by yoga?

Babaji: 'Yoga' is a relative term. Technically it means *chittā-vṛitti-nirodha*, the repression or blocking of mental states and processes. This is required in all the different paths of God-realization. Therefore, yoga does not mean any particular path. There are different kinds of yoga, as already delineated in the *Gita* by Bhagavan Himself. In *Karma-yoga* the mental processes are blocked through *karma* (action), and in *Jnana-yoga* through *jnana* (knowledge). In *Bhakti-yoga* they are controlled through *bhakti* (pure devotion). In *Patanjali-yoga* the mental processes are blocked through a long and arduous course of discipline involving *asana*, *pranayama*, *dhyana*, *dharana*, etc., and then the state of deep meditation called *samadhi* is reached. But, in *bhakti* that state is easily reached through loud *kirtan*, dance, and *seva-paricharya* or the loving service of the deity. In *Patanjali-yoga* the *vṛittis* (mental states) and the senses are repressed. The result is that when for any reason they become free, they run wild. In *Bhakti-yoga* they are not unduly repressed, only their direction is changed. They are turned away from the objects of the world and directed towards Krishna.

Another meaning of 'yoga' is joining together. Yoga is joining of the *chitta-vṛitties* with God through *Jnana*, *Karma* or *Bhakti*. This is done by *bhakti*, particularly *raganuga-bhakti* or *bhakti* based on relationship of love with God as His servant, friend, parent, wife or a lady in love much more easily.

Swamiji: I understand that you attain Krishna in Vraja through *bhakti*. But how will you get *mukti* (freedom from bondage), which is the ultimate end? It cannot be attained without the cessation of karma. Do not *seva-paricharya*, *kirtan* etc., in *bhakti* involve karma?

Babaji Mahashaya said laughingly, "A devotee not only does not want *mukti*, he shuns it. He wants only the loving service of Krishna. The question of *mukti* does not arise for

him, because there is no bondage for him. His bondage ends at the moment he surrenders to Krishna. All his activities are directed towards Krishna. Activities directed to Krishna cannot be the cause of bondage. It is only sinful activities that cause bondage. A devotee, who has surrendered to Krishna cannot commit sin.

So long Swamiji was listening with great attention and inwardly appreciating what Baba Mahashaya said. Now all his doubts had disappeared and the impact of Baba Mahashaya's speech and *bhava* on him was so strong that in a sudden outburst of emotion he embraced him. For some time both were locked in each others affectionate embrace. Both trembled in emotion and wept. After that they parted. They had met as strangers, but parted as good, old friends.

RETURN TO PURI

Babaji Mahashaya had now stayed in Cuttack for a month. The time for Jagannath Deva's Snana-Yatra (bathing ceremony) arrived. So he decided to return to Puri. The people of Cuttack would not let him go. But he soothed them with kind words and promised to come again.

He arrived at the station, but without making any arrangement for tickets. One of his companions asked him, "What about tickets?"

He said smilingly, "I do not have any urgent work at Puri. If Nitai Chand wants to take me there He will, otherwise we shall stay on here as long as He wants."

Just then a bell announced the opening of the booking-office. Passengers began to rush for tickets. But Baba Mahashaya remained sitting quietly, as if he did not have to go anywhere. He was only waiting to see what Nitai Chand had in mind, when a young man, who lived in Cuttack came

and handed over the tickets to Babaji. Baba said to him, "Did anyone ask you to bring these tickets?"

He replied with some fear, "No Maharaja, no one asked me. When I returned from the court I learnt that you were going to Puri. I thought of having your *darshan* before you left. As I was coming to the station it occurred to me, I do not know how, that I should purchase tickets for you. If I came and asked you, you might have refused. So I purchased the tickets without asking you. If I have committed an offense, kindly excuse me."

"No offense," said Baba Mahashaya, "I am only watching the *lila* of Nitai Chand."

Immediately he boarded the train along with his companions. They reached Puri at about 10 p.m.

Next morning a wave of *ananda* swept past the city with news regarding the arrival of Baba Mahashaya. People began to come to see him, as if he had been out for a number of years.

Baba Mahashaya went to the Temple of Jagannath for *darshan* singing and dancing as usual. Whosoever saw him, followed him. Even those who did not want to go to see Jagannath, because they were otherwise busy, followed him. The shop-keepers left their shops to follow him. The children left their game and went dancing with him in front of the *kirtan*. How wonderful! Barha Baba Mahashaya and his *kirtan* were even more attractive than Jagannath Himself!

Snana-Yatra, Ratha-Yatra, Gundicha-Marjana and other ceremonies of Jagannath followed one by one. Baba Mahashaya attended each and added to its magnificence and blissfulness through his dance and *kirtan*.

CHAPTER 23

TRAVELS IN ORISSA

One day Babu Shyamasundara Narendra, the landlord of Kendrapara, a city a few miles from Cuttack, came to Babaji Mahashaya and said entreatingly "I have come to take you and your party with me to Kendrapara. I shall be grateful if you kindly agree to go this evening." Baba Mahashaya agreed. After attending the *arati* of Radhakanta in the evening he reached the Puri station with all of his companions and disciples, except two or three, whom he left in the Ashram. Shyamasundara Babu wanted to purchase inter-class tickets for him and some of his prominent followers. Baba Mahashaya said, "No Shyamasundara, if you want to please me, you must not distinguish between me and the other Vaishnavas."

"Then I shall purchase inter-class tickets for all" said Shyamasundara feeling somewhat ashamed.

Baba Mahashaya said, "Why waste money. We shall all go in third class."

So they sat in third class compartment in the train and reached Cuttack at night. Staying in Cuttack for the night, they reached Kendrapara the next day by boat. Shyamasundara Babu wanted to take Baba Mahashaya to his house in a palanquin, but Baba went on foot dancing and singing as was his wont.

On reaching the house he performed *kirtan* before Govinda

Deva in the temple inside the house. Tears incessantly flowed from his eyes and horripilation appeared all over his body during the *kirtan*. The news soon spread all over Kendrapara that a *mahapurusha* had come, whose *kirtan* and dance, *bhava* and everything else was unearthly. People began to come in large numbers to see him.

MIRACULOUS CURE OF GOKULA'S MALADY

Kirtan was performed in the Temple of Govinda Deva every day. After two or three days Baba Mahashaya asked Shyamasundara Babu to make arrangements for *ashtaprahar-kirtan*. Necessary arrangements were made. *Adhivas-kirtan* was about to begin, when news came that the condition of Gokula Babu, the younger brother of Shyamasundara Babu, was serious. Baba asked Shyamasundara "What has happened to Gokula?"

Shyamasundara: He has been suffering from colic pain for a long time. No treatment has done him any good. Now for the last few days he has been suffering from terrible tremor. His entire body trembles vigorously. It appears that he will not survive.

Babaji: Where is he?

Shyamasundara: He is in the room adjoining my office

Babaji: What does he eat?

Shyamasundara: He cannot swallow even a few drops of milk.

Babaji: Oh, how pitiable! Let us go and see him.

Baba Mahashaya went and saw that Gokula's body was shivering terribly. Four or five persons were holding his hands and feet. Baba sat on one side of his bed and putting his hand upon his chest said, "Gokula! How are you?" Gokula was speechless. He seemed to convey from his look that he was in deep agony and that he surrendered himself at his feet

for ever and ever. Baba Mahashaya's eyes became wet. His lips moved. No one knew what he said to himself. His right hand, which was already on Gokula's chest, began to tremble. Slowly his entire body was in tremor. The tremor was so terrible that everybody got alarmed. Slowly Gokula's tremor mingled in the tremor of Baba Mahashaya's body and Gokula became allright. He held Baba Mahashaya's feet close to his heart and tears flowed profusely from his eyes. Baba asked, "How do you feel now?"

Gokula: I am perfectly well, both physically and mentally.

Babaji: Would you still take medicine?

Gokula: I shall do as you advise.

Babaji: If I ask you to throw away all the costly medicines that have been brought from Calcutta, will you comply?

Gokula: Most certainly.

Babaji: Then go and throw them away in the Gobra River.

Gokula went and threw in the river all the medicines costing about four hundred rupees. On returning he lay prostrate at the feet of Baba. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him. There was no end to the surprise and happiness of Shyamasundara Babu and others to see this sudden change in Gokula.

ASHTAPRAHAR KIRTAN

Baba Mahashaya came back to the temple and started *adhivas-kirtan*. After *adhivas* he asked Shyamasundara Babu and his four brothers to come to the temple early next morning after bathing. Next morning, as soon as they arrived, Babaji Mahashaya asked Ananda Panda, the *pujari* in the temple to give him the *charanamrita* of Gopal-yantra¹ in the temple. As

¹ A copper or silver plate on which Gopal-mantra is inscribed.

soon as the *pujari* gave him *charanamrita*, there was horripilation all over his body and tears streamed out of his eyes. With a choked throat he asked his followers to sing *Harinama*. They started singing:

“*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama!*”

There were about one hundred people in the courtyard. Baba Mahashaya was standing in the verandah of the temple. He raised the forefinger of his right hand and uttered some *mantra*, looking at each one of the assembled persons. The very next moment all of them began to weep. No one knew why he wept. This continued for half an hour. It was perhaps intended to purify and inspire them. After they were thus purified and inspired *ashtaprahar-kirtan* was started. Everyone was so inspired that he sang and danced in frenzied ecstasy. The sound of *kirtan* rent the sky. More and more people came and joined the *kirtan*. One does not know what power Babaji Mahashaya had infused in this *kirtan* to make it so inexplicably attractive that *kirtan*-parties belonging to the different areas situated within a radius of ten miles from Kendrapara came uninvited and uninformed, dancing and singing with *khol* and *karatal* and joined it like small rivers, roaring and rippling, and automatically flowing towards the sea. Even the washermen carrying the bundle of clothes and wood-cutters carrying the load of wood over their head stopped near the site of the *kirtan* and began to dance. Small children, some dressed and some nude, also joined the *kirtan* and sang and danced in heavenly glee. The *kirtan* party danced in a circle with Baba Mahashaya standing in the centre. From time to time Baba Mahashaya embraced a member of the party and left him to sing and dance with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. Who can describe in

words the unprecedented wave of *ananda* released by the *kirtan*? They alone knew, who saw and felt it.

Kirtan continued till next morning, after which every one went out for *nagara-kirtan*. Baba Mahashaya went singing *Harinama* and dancing in front and innumerable people followed him dancing and singing in ecstasy. The people of Kendrapara, who saw the *kirtan* procession said to each other, "We never heard this kind of *kirtan* before and we never saw a *mahapurusha* like the one leading the *kirtan*. He is certainly not a man, but the very image of *bhakti* singing and dancing on the streets of Kendrapara. Blest is Kendrapara and blest is Shyamasundara Babu, whose courtesy has enabled us to have his *darshan*."

The *kirtan*-party returned to Govindaji's Temple at one o'clock. They took *mahaprasada*, specially prepared for the occasion and retired for rest.

One day Babaji Mahashaya and his companions were bathing in Govinda Deva's pond. It was a huge pond. In the middle of the pond there was a mound, rising above water like a mountain. On the mound was built a temple. Baba Mahashaya was in a sportive mood. He said to Shyamasundara Babu, "Let us see who swims across the pond and reaches the temple first." Shyamasundara Babu said, "We shall start together." Baba Mahashaya said, "No, you will all start together. I shall follow seconds later. Everyone started. Baba Mahashaya followed, but he was using only his feet, not his hands. His hands were on his chest, above water and he was doing *japa*.¹ It appeared that he was walking, not swimming. Still everyone was surprised to see that he reached the temple first. Everyone was tired on reaching the temple, but not Baba Mahashaya.

¹ Here '*japa*' means not counting on beads but counting on fingers.

After everyone had returned to Govinda Deva's Temple, Shyamasundara Babu and his four brothers took initiation (*diksha*) from Baba Mahashaya.

INITIATION OF KRISHNAMAN SINHA

One day Barha Baba Mahashaya was sitting in the first floor of Shyamasundara Babu's house. He was talking with Shyamasundara and some other people. In the ground floor there were some servants and other people. One of them was Krishnaman Sinha. He was telling another man in a whisper, "Barha Babaji Mahashaya gives *mantra* to rich people, even forcibly, if they do not want to take it. He does not care for the poor. I am a poor man. So there is no chance of my getting *mantra* from him." Just at that time Baba Mahashaya became restless and began to call, "Krishna, Krishna!" Shyamasundara Babu said, "Which Krishna, Baba? there is no Krishna here."

Baba said, "Krishnaman Sinha is downstairs. Please, send someone to call him."

Shyamasundara Babu sent a man to call Krishnaman Sinha. He came trembling with fear. Baba Mahashaya said with a smile, "Yes Krishnaman, what did you say? I give *mantra* to rich people forcibly, but I do not care for the poor? You are mistaken. For Nitai Chand, rich and poor are alike, still He is more mercifully inclined towards the poor." So saying he whispered the *mantra* into his ear. Krishnaman Sinha fell at his feet and began to weep in repentance for the offense he had committed. Baba Mahashaya embraced him and spoke kind words to set aside his fear.

INITIATION OF DYUTISINHA, THE LEPER

One day Baba Mahashaya was invited by a devotee named

Raghava Mahanti for *mahaprasada*. When he was going to his house he saw Dyutisinha, a leper, on the way. He said to him, "O Dyutisinha! You have done all you wished, all you could. Still you have not come to your own!" Dyutisinha was surprised to see a *mahapurusha*, he had never known, calling him by name. He said in bewilderment, "Maharaja! I could not understand what you mean!"

Then Baba Mahashaya began to narrate all the sins he had committed in his present and past lives. He was narrating and Dyutisinha was listening amazedly and ruefully. At the end he fell at his feet weeping and said, "Maharaja! I am a great sinner. My sins are written all over my wretched body. Look, my fingers are falling. My toes have also become numb and may fall any moment. There is no end to my misery. There is no one who would listen to me or talk to me, or even sit by my side. I have been abandoned by my own people. I now take shelter under your feet, because you have taken pity on me. Kindly deliver me from my sins. If you do not, who else will? I have read that Mahaprabhu had delivered a leper from his miserable condition by his embrace. But that leper was a *bhakta*. I have no *bhakti*. On the other hand I have committed countless offenses against God and the Vaishnavas. There would be no place for me even in hell. My only hope lies in your mercy. I am doomed for ever and ever." So, saying he fell at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya and began to weep aloud and roll on the ground in deep repentance and agony.

Kind-hearted and ever so merciful Babaji Mahashaya lifted him up, embraced him, gave him *mantra*, and said, "Dyutisinha! I take all your sins upon myself. Do not fear, for now all your sins are gone. You can freely engage yourself in *bhajan* and attain the lotus feet of the Lord."

Dyutisinha: Most merciful Gurudeva! I am not capable of

doing any *bhajan* or practising any *sadhana*. I do not know what my fate is going to be.

Baba Mahashaya: You need not do anything. Only chant *Harinama*. That alone will deliver you from bondage and bring upon you the mercy of the Lord.

Dyutisinha: Kindly tell me which Name I should chant.

Baba Mahashaya: There is no Name so merciful as the Names of Nitai-Gauranga. In this age of Kali, when the *jivas* are bound to commit offenses on account of their fallen condition, the only hope is the causeless mercy of Nitai-Gauranga, Who do not take into account their offenses. So chant Their Names. If you bow down to Them and chant Their Names but once in a day, with faith or even without faith, you are bound to receive Their mercy.

Dyutisinha breathed a new life of hope and fulfilment. Overpowered by a feeling of deep gratitude he wanted to make a request to Baba Mahashaya, but could not gather courage to say anything.

Babaji Mahashaya, however, could read his mind. He said, "Dyutisinha come, let us go to your house."

Dyutisinha began to dance with joy. He said, "Omniscient Prabhu! The desire that you may kindly visit my house had just arisen in my mind and you, out of your infinite kindness, lost no time in fulfilling it."

Baba Mahashaya went to his house singing and dancing, took light *mahaprasada* at his place and then went to the house of Raghava Mahanti. Shyamasundara Babu said to him, "Dyutisinha is such a wretch that if one takes his name but once in the morning, he has to pass the whole day without food and without peace, and you went and took *mahaprasada* at his place!" Baba Mahashaya laughed a little and said, "Shyamasundara! that man is good. Do not go by his external appearance. His heart is pure. Very soon you will see him in his real

self." His words came true. Not long after Baba Mahashaya left Kendrapara, there was a formidable change in him. People were surprised to see that he was always engaged in *bhajan-kirtan*, *Bhagavata-patha*¹ and the service of the Vaishnavas.

DEPARTURE OF GOVINDA DADA

Babaji Mahashaya was staying in the office of Shyamasundara Babu, while his followers were staying in his house. One morning he was looking very grave. At about seven o'clock he wrote a letter to Govinda Dada and sent it to him through a boy. The letter was as follows:

"Dear Govinda. As soon as you receive this letter go on foot to Vrindavan. Live in Radhakunda on *madhukari* and sweep Radhakunda every day. No more meeting with me at present. We shall meet later at some other place, as Nitai Chand has willed.

Vaishnavadasanudas,
(Servant of the servants of Vaishnavas)
Radharamana Charan Das."

The letter came to Govinda Dada and others as a thunderbolt. Everyone said, "How and for what reason Babaji Mahashaya, who is ever so kind, has suddenly become so hard?"

After a little while, however, Govinda Dada said slowly and coolly to the boy who had brought the letter, "I shall comply. Let him be happy. Convey my *dandavat* to him."

The boy returned and conveyed this to Baba Mahashaya.

¹ Reading of *Bhagavatam*.

He remained quiet and grave as before. His attendant disciples also did not have the courage to speak to him. After a short while came Nityasvarupa Brahmachari and said, "If you kindly permit I may also go to Vrindavan with Govinda Dada."

Babaji: You can certainly go. I have no objection.

Nityasvarupa: If Govinda Dada comes and performs *dandavat* to you before...

Babaji: No!, mind your own business. Let alone others.

Nityasvarupa could not say anything further. He went back with tears in his eyes and told Govinda Dada everything. Then came two other disciples, Shyamananda Das and Nitai Das and asked for permission to go with Govinda Dada. Baba Mahashaya permitted them as well. Shyamasundara Babu and others were standing before Baba Mahashaya and watching everything like wooden dolls, without saying anything.

Govinda Dada, Nityasvarupa Brahmachari, Shyamananda Das and Nitai Das could wait no longer. They started for Vrindavan singing:

*"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."*

Tears were constantly flowing from their eyes. Those who saw them going were also weeping. The whole atmosphere was charged with lamentation. Only Babaji Mahashaya was sitting calm and quiet like one totally undisturbed and unconcerned. At this time Shyamasundara Babu came. Deeply aggrieved and agitated he lay prostrate before Baba Mahashaya and said in a voice trembling with fear, "I have a request. I want to give the four persons going to Vrindavan some money for the journey. You should not object."

"What objection can I have?" said Baba Mahashaya. "If they accept you can give."

Shyamasundara Babu went and said to Govinda Dada, "Govinda Dada, I have brought some money for your journey, please accept. I have asked Barha Baba Mahashaya also. He has no objection." Govinda Dada said, "Oh, I see! My examination is not yet over" and he quickened his pace towards Vrindavan.

Shyamasundara Babu returned disappointed. He told Baba Mahashaya that Govinda Dada refused to accept anything. Baba Mahashaya was pleased to hear this. There was now a change in him. With tears in his eyes he asked, "Has Govinda really gone?"

"Yes" said Shyamasundara "You sent him. I can still send someone to get them back, if you want."

"No, no. Don't do that. They are going to Vrindavan. You must not obstruct," replied Baba Mahashaya. He was again in tears as he said this.

Lalita Dasi had so far been looking for the right moment to say what she felt she must. She now came forward and said, "We never knew that you could be so hard-hearted. You did not even allow Govinda Dada to come and make *dandavat* to you before leaving. Now why shed crocodile tears?"

Babaji: You people do not know. Good times are ahead for Govinda. By the grace of Nitai Chand he is going to Vrindavan and he will make good progress. Nitai Chand is never hard on any one.

Lalita: We, the *jivas* of Kali, are too weak and imbecile. How can we in moments of adversity reconcile ourselves to it under the belief that it would be the harbinger of happiness?

Babaji: When Nitai Chand wants to shower His mercy upon anyone, He has also to prepare him for it. He is not ignorant like you. He is omniscient. He knows your weakness and shortcomings. He also knows how to remove them and does whatever is necessary towards that end.

Lalita: May be, still I would like to know for what fault of his you gave Govinda this punishment?

Babaji: Do you think that going to Vrindavan, living in Radhakunda are punishment? There are many *mahatmas*, who covet that kind of punishment.

Lalita: But don't you often emphasize the importance of the company of the holy persons (*sadhu-sanga*) and say that even if a person is a hypocrite, a non-believer or an atheist he is bound to change in the company of a *sadhu*, for such is the inconceivable effect of his personality and that the company of the *sadhhus* is one of the most essential requirements of *bhakti*?

Babaji: That is true, but what you understand by *sadhu-sanga* is not true. *Sadhu-sanga* is not a bodily phenomenon. It is a mental phenomenon. Let me explain this by means of a story:

In a certain village there lived two Brahmins—Dinanath and Raghunath. Both were good friends, but their temperaments were different. Dinanath was a Vaishnava and a devotee, who passed most of his time in *bhajan* and *kirtan*. Raghunath was an atheist and a debauch. One day both of them were walking together. Dinanath said, "Let us go to listen *Bhagavata-patha*. Let us not waste our time in eating, drinking and making merry like animals. Human life is precious. It is meant for *bhajan*."

Raghunath said, "I do not agree. Human life is meant for enjoyment, otherwise why has God given us the *pravritti* or natural tendency for enjoyment and why has He created all the luxurious things, which man alone can enjoy? Let us go to the market, take a cup of wine and then go to the house of a prostitute and enjoy."

Each tried to convince the other that the best and the most fruitful way of passing the time at their disposal was the way he had suggested, but could not. So each

went his own way. Dinanath went to listen to *Bhagavata-patha*, Raghunath to the house of a prostitute.

At this time Narayana and Devarshi Narada were engaged in a lively conversation in Vaikuntha. Suddenly Narayana laughed. Narada said to Narayana, "Prabhu, why did you laugh?"

Narayana: I laughed to see the condition of two Brahmins in *Mrityuloka*.¹ Dinanath, a devout Vaishnava and Raghunath, a rank sinner, the former listening to *Bhagavata-patha* in the company of *sadhus*, the latter enjoying the company of a prostitute. Both died in that condition, because they were destined to die that very moment. The former was taken to hell by the *Yamadutas* (the agents of Yama, the god of death), the latter to Vaikuntha by the *Vishnudutas* (the agents of Vishnu).

Narada: How could this happen Prabhu? Does it not falsify Your own pronouncements in the *shastras*? Have You not repeatedly emphasized the importance of *sadhu-sanga* and said that those, who live in the company of *sadhus* and are engaged in *patha-kirtan* and other religious activities ultimately come to You, while those who live in the company of wicked persons and are engaged in sinful activities go to hell?

Narayana: That is true Narada. But have I not also said in *Bhagavad-Gita* that what becomes of a man after death depends on the state of his mind at the time of leaving the body? Dinanath was only outwardly listening to the *Bhagavata-patha* in the company of *sadhus*. In his mind he was thinking about his old friend Raghunath—"Oh! how at this time my friend must be enjoying the company of a young and beautiful prostitute. The prostitute's room must be beautifully decorated with chandeliers, curtains, carpets, cushions, and flowers and tastefully fumigated with scent and incense. She must also have

¹ The mundane sphere.

decorated herself with ornaments and must be entertaining Raghunath with her dance and songs. Drunken Raghunath must be feeling that he is in heaven." Thus mentally Dinanath was neither in the company of *sadhus*, nor he was listening to *Bhagavata-patha*. He was in the company of his licentious friend and was enjoying the dance and song of the prostitute.

On the other hand, Raghunath was thinking at that time, "My good friend Dinanath must be listening to the *Bhagavata-patha*. Oh how purifying and sublimating must be the atmosphere of the *patha*—the *pathaka*¹ sitting on a raised platform, a copy of *Srimad Bhagavatam* placed before him on a wooden *chauki*,² a *tulasi* plant placed by the side of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, and a number of *sadhus* and other devotees wearing *kanthi* and *tilaka* sitting all round and shouting 'Haribol!' from time to time." He was thus mentally in the company of *sadhus* and listening their shouts of 'Haribol!'

Narada: I understand. But will Dinanath's life-long *bhakti-sadhana* go in vain?

Narayana: No, certainly not. But the fruits of *bhakti-sadhana* will be delayed on account of his cogitation at the time of death.

INITIATION OF A BITCH

Near the house of Shyamasundara Babu there lived under a tree a Nepali ascetic. He always kept fire burning before him. He had a bitch, whom he called Sukhiya. Sukhiya was wholly dependent upon him. She always remained by his side. No one could entice her away from him even for a moment. She ate what the ascetic ate and when the ascetic slept she

¹ The Pandit reading aloud from *Bhagavatam* or delivering a discourse on it.

² Small stool.

slept by his side. One morning, when Babaji Mahashaya was sitting outside the house of Shyamasundara Babu the ascetic beat her with a tong. The ascetic often beat her like that in order to discipline her. But that day's punishment touched her to the core of her heart. She began to cry and went and stood before Babaji Mahashaya. The devotees attending upon Baba Mahashaya tried to remove her from there, but the more they tried, the more she slunk under the *chauki* on which Baba Mahashaya was sitting. The ascetic called "Sukhiya, Sukhiya!," but Sukhiya would not listen. Then he came to Baba Mahashaya and told him everything about her. Baba Mahashaya said to her caressingly, "Ma! the ascetic has parental affection for you. So long he has taken care of you and travelled with you from place to place. It is not proper for you to leave his company for slight-punishment." Still Sukhiya did not come out of the *chauki*. Then Baba Mahashaya left the *chauki* and stood aside. Sukhiya came out and began to roll on his feet. Baba Mahashaya asked the ascetic to take her away forcibly. But as the ascetic touched her she began to cry. He said to her pathetically, "O Sukhiya! I have brought you up like my child and taken so much trouble for you. Now in a trice you have forgotten me altogether. Don't be like this. Come, I will not beat you any more." The ascetic's cajolement had no effect. He went back frustrated and broken-hearted.

Baba Mahashaya went inside the house and Sukhiya followed him. From that moment she never left him.

One day Baba Mahashaya went to bathe in the river with his companions. Sukhiya followed. Baba said to Sukhiya, "Sukhiya, you will also have to bathe today." Surprisingly Sukhiya immediately plunged into the river. She bathed to her heart's content. After they had all returned home and done their morning *pūja*, they started *kirtan*. Sukhiya came all of a sudden and began to roll on the ground in the midst of *kirtan*.

Everyone was surprised to see this. While she was thus rolling on the ground Baba Mahashaya gave *mantra* in her ear. The devotees shouted "Haribol!"

Fortunate Sukhiya found her guru. The way to her ultimate deliverance was paved. Was this due to the causeless mercy of ever so merciful Barha Babaji Mahashaya or the good deeds Sukhiya had done in her past lives? May be she was a saint in the past and was born as a bitch on account of his attachment to a bitch, like the saint Bharata, who was born as a deer on account of his attachment to a fawn.

One day Babaji Mahashaya expressed his desire to travel in the rest of Orissa. Shyamasundara Babu was happy to know this. He said, "After so long a time the stars now seem to be favourable for Orissa. Orissa is going to breathe a new life of love and devotion." He made necessary arrangements. He also arranged for ten palanquins, because the distance between stoppages was usually long and the way was not always smooth. But Baba Mahashaya refused to go on palanquin, for that did not serve his purpose. His purpose was not sight-seeing, but the dissemination of the message of Mahaprabhu and the seeds of *prema-bhakti* all over Orissa. This was the only purpose of his life and all his doings. His tours and travels were always directed towards this end. The means through which he achieved this end was *kirtan*, mainly the *kirtan*:

*"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."*

Through these two lines he conveyed the essence of the teachings of Mahaprabhu. The first line indicates the End to be achieved, that is, the lotus feet of Nitai, Gaura, Radha and Shyama. The second line indicates the means through which

the End can be achieved, that is, the 'Hare Krishna' *mahamantra*. We are asked by the word '*bhaja*' to meditate on Nitai, Gaura, Radha and Shyama and by the word '*japa*' to chant the *mahamantra*. The order in which the Names of Nitai, Gaura, Radha and Shyama occur is significant. Nitai is the *Guru-tattva* (Guru-principle). We must first surrender to the Guru and meditate on Gaura under His guidance. Since Gaura is the very image of the love for Radha-Krishna, meditation on Gaura will generate in our hearts the love for Radha-Krishna and lead us to the attainment of Their loving service in Vraja.

Baba Mahashaya went dancing and tripping and singing these lines wherever he went. Dancing and singing were natural to him. They were the natural spilling out of love and bliss, with which his heart was always overfilled. Therefore his dance and *kirtan* automatically aroused *bhava* in the hearts of people, who met or saw him. He was thus a veritable moving dynamo of *bhakti*, from which the battery of the hearts of people got automatically charged. If it did not in the case of people, whose hearts were thickly insulated with adverse *samskaras*, his loving embrace always did the job.

Shyamasundara Babu provided Baba Mahashaya with guides, who were familiar with the different places in Orissa and the paths that led to them. But his perennial guide was Nitai Chand, Who always took him to the exact destination without the guidance of anyone else.

Baba Mahashaya stayed at each place for a number of days. As long as he stayed he kept the people spell bound by his *kirtan*. People came to him in large numbers to place their problems before him and remove their doubts and difficulties and went back satisfied. Many times they found that their questions were answered, doubts were removed, fears allayed and feelings assuaged through his *kirtan*. They were surprised that the verses he sang dealt in detail with the very questions they wanted to

ask. Sometimes Baba was compelled by his infinite kindness to remove the suffering or want of people in a miraculous way. But he always attributed the miracles to Nitai Chand or the power of the Name.

AT KHANDAGIRI

Babaji Mahashaya started on his journey accompanied by his party, Shyamasundara Babu and some of his men. They went to Barimul, Nikarai, Olan Hill, Paigamber Hill and then to Khandagiri Hill. On Khandagiri Hill a huge camp was pitched by Syamasundara Babu's men. On one side of the camp arrangement was made for the dwelling of Babaji Mahashaya and his party, on the other side for Shyamasundara Babu and his men.

In a village near the hill there was a Math of Ramanandi Vaishnavas.¹ The *mahanta* of the Math used to celebrate *Kartika-purnima* on the hill. The main part of the celebration used to be *Rasa-lila*.

When the *mahanta* came to know that Babaji Mahashaya was going to the hill a day earlier and would stay there for the night, he decided to hold the celebration on the same day. When Babaji Mahashaya arrived on the hill, he saw that the celebration was going on with great eclat. It looked like a grand fair with shops scattered all over the hill, shows and entertainments of different kinds going on and crowds of people pouring in constantly. Slowly it became dark. The hill was aglow with hundreds of torches. Babaji Mahashaya started *kirtan* inside the camp. A crowd of about five thousand people was drawn in. The *kirtan* continued till 11 p.m. After that everyone inside the camp was to be fed with *mahaprasada*. Arrangements were

¹ Followers of Acharya Ramananda, who worship Lord Rama.

made for the *mahaprasada* of only five hundred men. It was never expected that more people would come up the hill at night to listen to Baba Mahashaya's *kirtan*. Everyone was at a fix. Balarama Babu, Shyamasundara Babu's brother, came to Baba Mahashaya in a fit of anxiety and said, "Baba! I do not know what is going to happen now. We have *mahaprasada* only for five hundred people, while we have to feed five thousand!"

Baba Mahashaya said, "Do not worry. Go to the place where *mahaprasada* is kept and with folded hands pray to Mother Annapurna¹ saying, 'Most merciful Ma! So many hungry people are to be fed. It is night and the place is hilly. No arrangement for extra food is possible. Kindly see that all are adequately fed with what we have.' After this make the people sit in lines for taking *mahaprasada* and ask the *pujaris* to serve. I am also coming."

Balarama Babu went and prayed to Ma Annapurna, then asked everyone to sit down for *mahaprasada*. In the mean time Baba Mahashaya went to the place where *mahaprasada* was kept, shouted "Jai Nitai!" and asked the *pujaris* to go and serve *mahaprasada* freely and without any fear. He also went and stood where the *prasada* was being served. It was found that there was shortage of *pattals*. All the *pattals* that were available from the shops on the hill were purchased. Still some *pattals* were short. People, who could not get *pattals* spread pieces of cloth before them, on which *prasada* was served.

The *pujaris* began to serve. All those present ate to their fill. Shyamasundara Babu, Balarama Babu and others were surprised. They came to Baba Mahashaya and after making obeisance to him said, "So many people ate to their heart's content, still *prasada* remains for more than twenty-five persons. We simply wonder how this has happened!"

¹ The goddess who feeds the world.

Baba Mahashaya said, "We may wonder, but nothing is impossible for the Lord. You know that He fed ten thousand *rishis* out of a single particle of Draupadi's food. Is it not, therefore, a simple thing for him to feed five thousand people with the food prepared for five hundred persons?"

AT BANDHADIHI

From Khandagiri Babaji Mahashaya went to Bankshai, Kuyapal, Mahanga, and Kuyerapur. From Kuyerapur he started for Singapur on the invitation of Babu Gopinath Roy, the manager of the Raja of Madhupur. While starting he asked Chamukaran Kshetravasi, the Revenue collector of Bankshai to accompany him upto Bandhdihi, a village on way to Singapur, where he had to stay for a day at the invitation of Babu Raghunath Sinha Mahanti. Kshetravasi had keenly desired somehow to get the *adharamrita*¹ of Baba Mahashaya and an opportunity to massage his feet. But at the same time he had resolved in his mind not to ask for this favour. At Bandhadihi Baba Mahashaya performed *kirtan* till 11 o'clock at night. After *kirtan* he took *prasada* and left some *adharamrita* on his *pattal*. Usually Shyamasundara Babu ate his *adharamrita*. But that day he said to Shyamasundara Babu, "Shyamasundara, you do not eat my *adharamrita* today. Ask Kshetravasi to eat it." He said this and went to sleep. Kshetravasi was very happy to receive the *adharamrita*. A little while later Baba Mahashaya called him and said, "Kshetravasi, you are good at massage. Come, let me see how you massage my feet." There was no end to Kshetravasi's happiness on seeing that both of his desires were fulfilled the same day. Overjoyed and overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude he fell at Baba Mahashaya's feet and began to weep.

¹ Remains of food eaten by a Vaishnava.

AT SINGAPUR

The next morning Babaji Mahashaya started for Singapur. About a mile from Bandhdihi, in village Chandpur he saw that a large number of people—men, women and children—had assembled on the roadside for his *darshan*. On their prayerful insistence he had to stop there for sometime.

At this time Gopinath Roy was busy making preparations for proper reception of Babaji Mahashaya at Singapur. He decorated the path upto two miles from Singapur with buntings and flowers, made special arrangements for illumination and wished that Baba Mahashaya arrived at night. When everything was ready he went to Chandpur to bring Baba Mahashaya. As soon as he reached there Baba said, "Gopi, your desire will be fulfilled. I shall reach Singapur after sunset." Gopinath Babu was surprised. He was also pleased to see that Baba Mahashaya was so kindly disposed towards him.

Baba Mahashaya took his bath, went through his morning *puja* and started *kirtan*. A large number of people—men, women and children—had gathered. They were all dancing and singing. The entire village was in ecstasy. But Shyamasundara Babu was rolling on the ground and weeping in deep agony, for Baba Mahashaya had asked him to return home from Chandpur and he was finding it impossible to leave his company. One does not know what came to the mind of Baba Mahashaya, whose ways are inscrutable, he planted his feet on the back of Shyamasundara Babu and stood there in a half-conscious mood with his eyes half-closed. In this state he gave *mantra* to a number of people, who had been asking for it. Fortunate Shyamasundara Babu remained lying all the time in a state of unprecedented bliss. When sometime had elapsed like this Baba Mahashaya was made to take *prasada* and rest.

At four o'clock Baba Mahashaya sent back Shyamasundara Babu and some of his men after consoling and comforting them in various ways and started for Singapur. He reached Singapur after dusk and entered the *kacheri*¹ of Singapur singing and dancing with his companions. *Kirtan* continued for a couple of hours after which they took *mahaprasada* and retired for sleep.

Next morning they went out for *nagara-kirtan* and returned at 11 a.m. Gopinath Babu provided them with many green coconuts. Baba Mahashaya broke one, drank some of its water and poured the rest on the ground saying, "Drink Shyamasundara."

Lalita Dasi said, "What do you mean? Where is Shyamasundara?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "Shyamasundara is unable to bear the pain of our separation. He is still lying in his *kacheri* in Bankshai and is weeping. Prabhu's *prasadi* coconut water will soothe him."

As Baba Mahashaya did this, Shyamasundara Babu's mouth was suddenly filled with the sweet water of coconut. He swallowed the water and began to think, "How wonderful! I am lying alone inside the room. How has coconut water come in my mouth? Is it a dream? But I have not been sleeping. Then is it due to the mercy of Gurudeva?"

At this time a man, whom he had sent to Singapur to bring the *adharamrita* of Babaji Mahashaya and who had seen him pouring the water on the ground as an offering to him, returned with the *adharamrita* and told him everything. He was overwhelmed with *bhava* to hear this and began to weep.

AT DHANESHVAR

From Singapur Babaji Mahashaya went to Dhaneshvar.

¹ Office-building of the manager or agent of a landlord.

Sri Chaturbhuja Das and other leading persons of the town received him and made him and his party stay in the Temple of Mahaprabhu in the town.

One day Babaji Mahashaya was engaged in talks with about forty or fifty people at the house of Chaturbhuja Babu. He was trying to impress upon them that in this age of Kali *nama-sankirtan* was the only means for destroying all evils and delivering the soul from bondage; it was also capable of bringing about *prema*.

One of them said, "I have been doing *nama-sankirtan* for several years, but I do not even know what *prema* is. I never had even one or two drops of tears of *prema* in my eyes."

Baba Mahashaya said, "*Prema* and Name are not different. *Prema* is already included in the Name. It is not experienced for want of eagerness and earnestness on our part. If you have a number of dainties spread out before you, but you do not have appetite, you would not like even to look at them. What is necessary is appetite or strong desire. It is the same with *prema*. One must have strong desire for it. One must know that *prema* and *prema* alone is the life and essence of this world and the next and one must feel the same concern for it as he does for his life, if one wants to realize it,"

Another person asked, "Is it not possible to realize *prema* through the *kirtan* of 'Hare Krishna' *nama*?"

"Why not," replied Babaji, "Mahaprabhu never said that you can realize Krishna-*prema* through the *kirtan* of one *nama* and not the other. Right now all of you together sing aloud, 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare' and you will see the result."

Everybody started "Hare Krishna" *nama-kirtan*. Baba Mahashaya himself sat down to count the *mantra* on beads. What a surprise. Hardly five or seven minutes had elapsed,

when tears began to stream out from the eyes of everyone. Slowly *kampa*,¹ *pulaka*² and other *sattvika-bhavas* also began to appear on their bodies. Their hearts burnt with a strong desire for Krishna-*prema* and were filled with a strange feeling of sweet restlessness for its attainment. This continued for about an hour and a half, during which they had no consciousness of the world including their own dear selves.

They had sung the *mahamantra* in *kirtan* so many times before, but never with this kind of experience. Obviously this was the result of earnest craving for *prema*, generated in their hearts by the company of Baba Mahashaya and the power and spell of his kind words.

AT JAJAPUR

From Dhaneshvar Baba Mahashaya went to Purushottampur and from there to Jajapur at the insistence of Sri Lalu Babu of Jajapur. Lalu Babu used to live with his widowed mother-in-law, who was a devoted lady. She received Baba Mahashaya and his party with great warmth and devotion.

The lady had the *vighraha* of Radha-Govinda in her house. The *seva* of Radha-Govinda was done by a Brahmin-*pujari*. Baba Mahashaya saw the *pujari* offering to Radha-Govinda unboiled rice baked in the sun and banana as *bhoga*. He said to the old lady, "What is this Ma? You offer unboiled rice to the Thakura!"

Ma: We are *Kayasthas* by caste. According to the custom prevailing here we cannot offer boiled rice to the Thakura.

Babaji: But how do you give the Thakura to eat what you cannot eat yourself?

¹ Trembling

² Horripilation

Ma: We are helpless Baba. This has been the practice in our house from generation to generation.

Babaji: Ma! Does it not hurt your heart to give unboiled rice to eat to the Thakura accustomed to eating Ma Yashoda's butter?

Ma: It does. But what can I do?

Babaji: Is there someone else who will object, if you give boiled rice to your Thakura?

Ma; Yes Baba, the Brahmins will object.

At this point Lalita Dasi intervened and said, "Very well Ma, you need not bother. So long as we are here, I shall cook myself and offer boiled things to the Thakura."

The lady agreed. Lalita Dasi prepared nice things along with boiled rice everyday and offered them to Radha-Govinda.

After three days Radha-Govinda said to the lady in a dream, "Ma! For the last three days I am very happy. Do not deprive Me of this happiness again. Give Me cooked things to eat twice every day."

The lady wept and said, "But if I do that Thakura, will not the Brahmins and my relatives be angry with me?"

Thakura retorted, "Ma! Are your relatives and the Brahmins, who are born of *Maya*, greater than Me? You will not make any headway in your spiritual life, if you pay heed to what they say. So, promise that without caring for them you will get things cooked by the *pujari* twice everyday and offer them to Me."

The lady narrated the whole story to Babaji Mahashaya with tears in her eyes. Baba Mahashaya said, "Ma! You are so fortunate. The Thakura has begged for food from you. Does He ever beg from anyone like this? Therefore I say you should make the best of your fortune and not be led away by what others say."

The lady said, again with tears in her eyes, "Baba! You kindly make the *pujari* understand. He should not raise any

objection." Baba Mahashaya called the *pujari* and convinced him that it was improper to offer unboiled rice to Thakura. So, thereafter cooked rice and other things began to be offered to the Thakura.

One day Baba Mahashaya was invited at the house of Mohini Babu, a local advocate. A number of other advocates were also invited by him. They were asking all kinds of questions and Baba Mahashaya was answering. At the end someone said, "You say that there are two kinds of *jivas*—*nitya-baddha* (eternally bound) and *nitya-mukta* (eternally free). *Nitya* or eternal is that which is true now, has always been true and will always be true. It has neither beginning nor end. Therefore *nitya-baddha* means one, who has always been in *Maya* and will always remain so. In other words it means that the *nitya-baddha* can never become *mukta*. Is it not so?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "You are right. *Nitya* means that which has neither beginning nor end. So, *nitya-baddha* means *anadi*, that which has no beginning. But *jiva*'s bondage is said to be *anadi*, not because it has no beginning, but because it is beyond our power to ascertain its beginning. It can, therefore, certainly end. The purpose of human life is to seek deliverance from it. But life is short and the *jivas* of Kali are wasting it in false pursuits under the spell of *Maya*. Therefore Nitai Chand came down in this age and went from door to door rousing the people from their slumber and distributing Krishna-*prema* to them. He is still, out of His infinite, causeless mercy kindly disposed towards them, and is eager to give them a loving embrace if only they turn to Him."

With this his eyes became red and tears began to stream out of them. He was so entranced that he sprang up from his seat shouting "*Jai Nityananda!*" and began to dance with eyes half closed. He sprang with such force that his head struck against

the wooden rod of a hand driven fan hanging from the ceiling of the room and the rod was thrown three or four feet upwards. One of the hooks of the rod struck his head and a stream of blood began to flow from it. But he was so absorbed in dance that he was quite unaware of it. Some others were also dancing. *Khol* was sounding and *karatal* ringing. Everyone was in ecstasy. But Navadwip Das was helplessly watching the blood-stream running down the face of Babaji and he was humming with fear and anxiety. Others were also painfully watching. But no one had the courage to stop him from dancing or even to touch him. When he calmed down, everyone went near and saw that blood had stopped. Lalita Dasi wiped the streaks of blood from his face with a corner of her *saree*. As she was doing so he asked, "Why, what is it?" Lalita Dasi wanting to tell him about the wound tried to locate it, but she was surprised to see that there was no sign of the wound anywhere. All others were also surprised because they had seen the blood flowing with their own eyes. They asked Baba Mahashaya, "Did you not feel any pain?"

He said, "I do not know anything. But if there was anything like a wound, could not the merciful Lord cure it and wipe off all trace of it immediately?"

The people of Jajapur now always talked about his supernatural dance and *kirtan*, his most convincing and tranquillizing discourses and above all his sweet nature and loving behaviour. They said, "We have never seen such a *mahapurusha* before and perhaps will never see again." It was Baba Mahashaya's wont to leave the place, where people began to extol him as someone great. The next morning, therefore, he said to Lalu Babu, "We have stayed in Jajapur too long. My mind is now restless for the *darshan* of Lord Jagannath. So, we must go to Puri tomorrow." Lalu Babu was requesting him to stay in Jajapur for some more time, when Brahmananda Babu, an advocate arrived with some friends and began to say with folded hands, "Maharaja!

We attended your *kirtan* yesterday. We had never heard such *kirtan* before. It was so inspiring and so touching to the heart that we cannot resist the desire to hear it more and more. I shall be obliged if you kindly do *kirtan* at my place tomorrow."

"But I am going to Puri tomorrow," said Baba Mahashaya.

On Brahmananda Babu's repeating his prayer, however, he said, "Very well, then I shall do *kirtan* at your place tomorrow and leave for Puri next morning." When Brahmananda Babu had gone Lalu Babu said to Baba Mahashaya, "Brahmananda is so wicked and fallen a person that no one likes to associate with him. He is a drunkard and skeptic and is particularly critical of the *sadhus* and *Vaishnavas*. So, you need not go to his place."

Baba Mahashaya said, "You mean I should go only to the house of those, who have faith in God and not to the house of the non-believers? I think that the non-believers deserve greater sympathy, because they have lost the way and the way has to be shown to them. Nitai Chand, when He was present here in person, changed Jagai-Madhai and a host of other sinners into saints. Now, when He is present in the form of the Name, can He not change the heart of a single person? The world is changeable. A man, who is sinner today, may become a saint tomorrow. He should not be ignored because of his present condition."

Baba Mahashaya reached the house of Brahmananda Babu in the afternoon along with his companions and started *sankirtan*. Brahmananda Babu had invited a number of advocates and other people to have Baba Mahashaya's *darshan* and listen to his *kirtan*. They were listening with rapt attention and with great astonishment, because they had never heard this kind of lively *kirtan* before. What makes the *kirtan* lively is *bhava*. Baba Mahashaya looked like the very image of *bhava*. *Bhava* itself was bursting forth in the form of his *kirtan* and

dance and the *sattvika-bhavas* or the outward signs of the inward *bhava* that adorned his body throughout the *kirtan*. Every word of his *kirtan* and every movement of his body was charged with the *bhava*-current, which touched the hearts of the audience and produced similar *bhava* in them. They felt that they were for the time being transported into a world that was much more soothing and enrapturing than anything they had experienced before.

The condition of Brahmananda Babu was not different. The *bhava*-current had touched his heart also and he was weeping all the time. At the close of *kirtan* he fell down at Baba Mahashaya's feet in deep distress and anxiety. He did not know what to say, but only wept and wept. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him and tried to soothe and console him in various ways. In the meantime *mahaprasada* was ready and everyone sat down to eat. But Brahmananda Babu remained standing at a distance. Baba Mahashaya said, "Come Brahmananda Babu. Sit here."

Brahmananda Babu said, "Excuse me Baba. I do not deserve to sit amongst you." On Baba Mahashaya insistence, however, he went and sat near him.

After everyone had taken *mahaprasada*, they went to sleep. Next morning, when Baba Mahashaya was ready to leave Brahmananda Babu came and said with folded hands and tears flowing from his eyes, "Baba Maharaja! It is my request that you kindly stay for one more day to deliver my beastly self from bondage by giving me *mantra*. I am the greatest sinner, greater than even Ajamila, Ratnakara, Jagai and Madhai, mentioned in the *shastras*. Who can deliver me except you? Kindly be merciful to me."

Baba Mahashaya thought for a while and said, "If Nitai Chand so wishes your desire shall be fulfilled. But it does not seem to be the desire of Nitai Chand that we should

stay here anymore. You need not be sorry. If Nitai wishes, we shall meet again." With this he started for Vaitarani Station in order to board the train for Puri.

As we have said before Baba Mahashaya never inquired from anyone about the route, when he went anywhere. So he was going ahead dancing in his peculiar style and singing:

*"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."*

Others were following repeating the *kirtan* after him.

After they had gone about a mile, he abruptly tarried for a while under a tree. His eyes were half closed and tears were profusely flowing from them, wetting his cheeks and chest. The hairs of his body bristled, cheeks reddened and trembled. Brahmananda Babu, who was trailing behind the party, weeping all the while, came running, attracted as iron is attracted by magnet, and fell at his feet. Baba Mahashaya exclaimed, "Oh! How merciful is Nitai!" and with this he lifted Brahmananda Babu, embraced him and uttered the *mantra* in his ear. His companions shouted "Jai Nitai!" in amazement and happiness. Brahmananda Babu again fell at Baba Mahashaya's feet and said with a voice choked with emotion, "I am a rank sinner, a wretch and a drunkard. I do not have words to express what I am. You are omniscient and know everything. I believe that you have appeared on earth only to deliver me. I depend entirely upon you. Your causeless mercy is my only hope."

Baba Mahashaya consoled him with his sweet words and sent him back. Then he renewed his march towards the station and boarded the train for Puri.

CHAPTER 24

CONVERSION OF ANANDA MITTRA AND OTHER EPISODES

On returning to Puri Babaji Mahashaya stayed in Radharamana Kunj along with Navadwip Das, Lalita Dasi, Rasarangani Dasi and Kunjadas Babaji and asked all others to live in Jhanjapita Math.

TESTING LALITA DASİ

In Radharamana Kunj Baba Mahashaya used to eat the *mahaprasada* of Radharamana, while the others took the *mahaprasada* brought from Jhanjapita Math by Kusum-manjari Dasi.

One day *bhoga* of one kilo rice was offered to Radharamana. The *mahaprasada* was consumed by Baba Mahashaya and three or four other persons, who happened to arrive at that time. After they had eaten four other persons arrived. Baba Mahashaya asked Lalita Dasi to cook one kilo rice for them. Navadwip Das went and brought two kilos of rice from the house of Kunja Bihari Roy as *bhiksha*. Lalita Dasi cooked one kilo out of that and served it to those persons after *bhoga* was offered to Radharamana. Just after they had finished eating some other devotees arrived. Baba Mahashaya again asked Lalita Dasi to cook for them. She cooked the remaining one kilo. At this time

the *mahaprasada* from Jhanjapita Math also arrived. Baba Mahashaya asked Lalita Dasi to serve the rice cooked by her together with the *mahaprasada* from Jhanjapita Math to everyone. After everyone had eaten Baba Mahashaya asked Kusummanjari Dasi and Rasarangani Dasi to eat what remained. Both of them said, "Lalita Dasi has not eaten anything. She may also be asked to share." Baba said, "Do not bother about her. You eat up everything." So they consumed the whole of it.

When they had eaten Baba retired for rest. Just after that a man came from Jena Math with some *chirhwa*,¹ milk and sweets. Baba noticed that from his room. He said to Lalita Dasi, "Do not offer these things to Radharamana just now. Let Him rest. Offer them when He wakes. Just now you keep them in my room."

Lalita Dasi understood that Baba Mahashaya had a new idea in mind. She smiled and kept everything in his room. At four o'clock those things were offered to Radharamana. Baba Mahashaya took a bit of the *mahaprasada* and distributed the rest amongst the devotees, avoiding only Lalita Dasi. Then he looked at her smilingly and said, "Oh! I forgot her. Doesn't matter, her purpose will be served by the particles that remain in the pots." Accordingly Lalita Dasi rubbed her finger in the pots, then put it in her mouth. Surprisingly that alone appeased her appetite and gave her complete satisfaction.

A little before dusk, as Baba Mahashaya was going out for Jagannath-*darshan*, Bhuvana Sahu's son Nitai Das came with *puri*,² *kachori*,³ *mohana-bhoga*⁴ and some other *prasada*. Baba Mahashaya broke away a piece from a *puri* and—without

¹ Rice wetted, parched and flattened.

² A sort of bread fried in *ghee*.

³ A sort of bread made from flour and filled with pulses and fried in *ghee*.

⁴ A sort of pudding.

eating it—asked Nitai Das to go and tell Lalita Dasi that it was my *mahaprasada*. Nitai Das did accordingly. But Baba Mahashaya had already told Lalita Dasi that if she got any *prasada* from anywhere, she must not consume it. At nine o'clock when he returned from the temple, he said to her, "Where is the *prasada*."

Lalita: Why? That was your *adharamrita*. So I ate it all.

Babaji: But it was not my *adharamrita*.

Lalita: You had yourself conveyed through Nitai Das that that was your *adharamrita*.

Babaji: But that was a lie. I had told so in order to test you.

Lalita: If that was a lie, what I have just said is also a lie. She brought the *thal* containing *puri*, *kachori* and *mohana-bhoga* and placed it before Baba Mahashaya.

Baba Mahashaya was surprised and pleased. He took a small part of the *prasada* and asked Lalita Dasi to take the rest.

FESTIVAL IN THE TEMPLE OF TOTA GOPINATH

Once in the month of *kartik* it came to the mind of Baba Mahashaya that in the Temple of Tota Gopinath in Puri, Tota Gopinath should be beautifully dressed and decorated as *natavar*¹ and a grand festival should be organized on the occasion. He himself went round for *bhiksha* and collected the necessary amount of money. Beautiful dress and ornaments were purchased for Gopinath. *Khir*² was prepared out of 80 kilos of milk and Jagannath's *mahaprasada* worth one hundred rupees was purchased for the Vaishnavas of Puri, who were all invited. A *kirtan-mandali*³ of repute was invited for dance and *kirtan*.

¹ A dancer.

² Preparation made of milk, rice and sugar.

³ Group of singers, who performed *kirtan*.

Gopinath was beautifully decorated by Navadwip Das. Crowds of people came for his *darshan*. Dance and *kirtan* continued till 7 p.m., after which *mahaprasada* was served to the Vaishnavas. When everyone had eaten Baba Mahashaya himself started *kirtan*. In *kirtan* he sang many extempore songs describing the beauty of Gopinath till late at night. When he stopped *kirtan* and Gopinath was about to be made to sleep, two of his disciples Shital Das and Brajendra Das sang in a soft tone from behind a screen a song describing the beauty of Krishna and Radha interlocked in each others arm in such a way that They appeared like one body, half blue, half golden.

On hearing the song, Baba Mahashaya shouted in a fit of *bhava* and fell unconscious on the ground. He lay completely motionless like a doll, and did not even appear to breathe. Navadwip Das and three others sat close to him and made his body lie on their laps. Navadwip Das asked Shital Das to sing the same song again. Shital Das was a boy. He was frightened and did not want to sing, because he thought his song had made him fall and become senseless. Navadwip Das explained to him that no harm had come to Baba Mahashaya and that he was lying in a state of blissfulness and blessedness, which could not be described. He then started singing. After sometime Baba Mahashaya became half-conscious but began to weep and roll restlessly on the ground like a child. The stones of the pavement were uneven. It was feared that his body might be bruised. So Navadwip Das and others lifted him bodily and made him lie outside beneath a banyan tree. There he lay motionless for sometime, then, addressing Nityananda Prabhu began to grumble and complain like this: "I was well at home. You brought me out. Now You are making me run and roam about. You attracted me by Your beauty, Your ambrosial words and divine qualities, but You are now teasing and tantalizing me. You appear and

disappear, but never come within my grasp. You asked me to go to Nilachal. When I reached Sakshi Gopal, You gave *mantra* in my ear. You have been always telling me where I should go and what I should do. But You have always been eluding my grasp. Does that befit You?!" He continued complaining endlessly in a fit of divine madness. He came to his own towards the end of night, when he returned to Jhanjapita Math.

OFFER OF SRI HARIVALLABHA BASU

One day Sri Harivallabha Basu, an advocate, came to Babaji Mahashaya. He wanted to propose his regular financial assistance to Jhanjapita Math so that the *sadhus* residing there did not have to depend on *bhiksha*. But he did not have the courage to make the proposal directly. He started by asking, "Baba! I am surprised to see excellent Vaishnava-seva always going on in Jhanjapita Math. How do you manage it?"

Babaji: Who am I to manage? Only He knows, Who manages it.

Harivallabha: If on any particular day you do not get any *bhiksha* and a number of Vaishnavas come to the Math, wouldn't that create a problem?

Babaji: When the benign Lord brings anyone to the Math He makes prior arrangement for his service. The responsibility for feeding the *jivas* is His, not anyone else's. Imagine when we were in the mother's womb, who fed us? And when we were born, who filled the mother's breast with milk even before our birth?

Harivallabha: True, but one should have faith in the Lord to be so favoured by Him. Everyone does not have the kind of absolute faith you have.

Babaji: It is not that the Lord feeds those, who have faith

in Him and does not feed those, who do not have faith. He feeds all. It is, however true that those who have faith are easily favoured, while those, who do not have faith, are not favoured so easily.

Harivallabha: I understand. But I would like to know one thing. Kindly tell me how one can make the best use of his money.

Babaji: One can make the best use of money by helping the poor, the needy and those who are engaged in *bhajan*.

Harivallabha: In this Ashram there are so many good souls doing *bhajan*. If some rich man wants to give sufficient money to the Ashram from month to month so that they do not have to bother for *bhiksha* for their sustenance and can devote themselves wholly to *bhajan*, would you have any objection? To tell you the truth, I have lots of money and I want to make some monthly contribution to help them in their *bhajan*.

Babaji: It is good that you want to help the Vaishnavas in *bhajan*. But you are an intelligent man. You should think whether your monthly financial assistance will really be helpful to them in their *bhajan*. One thing that is obvious is that from the day you start your monthly contribution, they will begin to depend wholly on you rather than on their Lord. In other words, you will become the object of their worship rather than He. Which is more conducive to *bhajan*, dependence on fixed monthly contributions from a particular person for all one's needs or having no ostensible means of subsistence and depending wholly on the Lord?

Harivallabha: Obviously dependence on the Lord is more helpful in *bhajan*. Then what should I do?

Babaji: You can assist them casually. Causal assistance will not do any harm.

Harivallabha: That can be done only so long as I am alive.

I want to make some arrangement by which my *seva* continues even after my death.

Babaji: Then I would suggest that instead of making any such arrangement for this Ashram, you make arrangement for fixed financial assistance for the *seva-puja* of Gadadhara Pandit Goswami's Tota Gopinath.

Harivallabha Babu, therefore, shifted his attention to Tota Gopinath and made some permanent arrangement for His *seva*.

REVIVAL OF GADADHARA

One day Babaji Mahashaya and his party were invited in the evening for *mahaprasada* at the house of one Harish Babu. When they were about to go there Gadadhara Das, a disciple of Baba Mahashaya, who had gone to draw water from the well in the Math, cried aloud, "Baba! I am bitten by a snake!" They all ran and brought him to the courtyard. Soon his entire body became blue, the joints became stiff and the tongue came out of the mouth. At that time Krishnananda Swami and Govindananda Parivrajaka, two disciples of Avadhuta Jnanananda Swami, were in the Math. They tied his leg tightly near the joint with a jute-string. Baba Mahashaya and others began to circumambulate his body and chant the Name loudly. The sound of *nama-kirtan* began to draw crowds from outside. The courtyard was filled with the crowd. Everyone thought that Gadadhara was dead. Baba Mahashaya struck Gadadhara in the head with his left foot. With the touch of his foot the condition of Gadhadara's body began to change. After a little while Baba Mahashaya again kicked his head and began to dance. Gadadhara got up with a start and began to look all round for Baba Mahashaya. He went amidst the *sankirtan*, caught hold of his feet and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya

calmed him with his sweet words, then asked him to dance. He began to dance and he danced so well that everyone was surprised, for he had never danced a single step before.

After the close of *kirtan* Gadadhara Das said to Baba Mahashaya with tears in his eyes, "Baba, according to my horoscope I was destined to die today. All that my horoscope says has come true. The horoscope says that this particular year, when I am sixty-one. I should die of snake-bite. I asked a number of astrologers whether there was any means by which the death could be averted. Everyone said that death was inevitable. It is for this reason that I renounced the world this year and took shelter under your feet. Though I knew that I was to die, I did not disclose this to anyone. As soon as I went to the well, I do not know from where a snake came and bit me in the forefinger of my right foot, I understood that death had come. But to my great surprise you saved me!"

Babaji: Don't say like that. The Name and the Lord are one. It is the Name that saved you.

Gadadhara: But I saw with my own eyes that I had left the body and you brought me back.

Babaji: Do you have your horoscope?

Gadadhara: I have.

Babaji: We will see it tomorrow. Come, let us go to Harish Babu's place for *mahaprasada*.

Gadadhara Das went. The next day his horoscope was shown to an astrologer. The astrologer confirmed all that Gadadhara had said. According to the horoscope that day was the last day of his life.

For three or four days Gadadhara had some pain in the fore finger. But the eyes of Baba Mahashaya became red and his body was so hot that even though he bathed three or four times during the day, he could not get sleep at night. This continued for three days after which he became allright.

Gadadhara Das lived in Puri for two years. After that Baba Mahashaya asked him to go to Vrindavan and live in Radhakunda. He lived in Radhakunda for two and half years and then passed away.

CONVERSION OF ANANDA MITRA

A few days back Navadwip Das had gone to Cuttack. One afternoon he came back with another devotee of Cuttack. The devotee said to Baba Mahashaya, "I have to make a request."

Babaji: Yes, let me know.

Devotee: I have come to take you to Cuttack with me at the invitation of Ananda Mitra.

Babaji: Who is Ananda Mitra?

Devotee: He is the most famous and perhaps the richest advocate of Cuttack. But it is difficult for me to say what he really is as a man. We read about Jagai, Madhai, Ratnakara and other sinners in the *shastras*. He can easily compare with them. There is no sin, howsoever heinous, which he has not committed. He is a skeptic and rank materialist. The only one good thing with him is that his heart melts to see the suffering of people, but he regards it as an infirmity in him and tries to suppress it. But by the grace of Navadwip Dada a sudden change has come upon him. The fire of penitence is now burning in his heart. Since Navadwip Dada has promised to surrender him at your feet, he is anxiously waiting to be blessed by you.

Babaji: How did the change come upon him?

Devotee: Oh! that is a long story. But I will cut it short. One day Navadwip Dada went to his house, singing, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama*," and beating cymbals as he sang. The gate-keeper, who knew his master's mind asked him to go away. But he did not listen. Then Ananda Babu came out and asked, "What do you want?"

Navadwip did not reply, but continued to sing, since his real purpose was to make him hear *Harinama*. Ananda Babu said angrily, "You maniac! Why don't you listen? What do you want?"

"Nothing" replied Navadwip smilingly.

"Then what have you come for?"

"I do not know."

"Then who knows?"

"The Lord knows."

In utter dejection Ananda Babu went in asking the servant to give the beggar four *pice*¹ and dismiss him. The servant began to give him the money, but he did not heed and continued to sing. Ananda Babu shouted from his drawing-room asking the servant why he did not give the money and dismiss him. The servant went in and told him, "Sir, he neither accepts the money nor leaves. He seems to be concerned only with *kirtan*." Ananda Babu was infuriated. He said, "Oh! the rogue will not leave like this. Wait, I am coming." Immediately the servant came out running and said to Navadwip Das, "Run away. Babu is coming. He will beat you." Navadwip laughed and began to sing more loudly. Ananda Babu came and said, "You swine of a man! Why don't you say what you want?"

Navadwip did not reply. He only looked at him smilingly. Ananda Babu was convinced that he was mad. He said in softer tone, "Take the money and go. Or let me know what you want."

Navadwip only wanted that he should listen to his *kirtan*. So he continued:

"*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*"

But why should Ananda Babu listen. He asked the servant angrily to go and bring his whip. The servant brought the whip.

¹ One rupee was equal to 64 pice.

Ananda Babu stood staring at Navadwip Das with the whip in his hand. Navadwip stood smiling and singing with greater enthusiasm. His eyes beamed with love and face was radiant with transcendent joy. Ananda Babu was surprised. He began to think that the fellow was neither mad, nor an ordinary beggar. There was a change in his attitude. He said in a soft persuasive tone, "Please, why not tell me what you want."

Navadwip then said with a smile, "I want something to eat."

"What will you eat?"

"*Lai* (parched rice)."

Ananda Babu threw four *pice* before him and said, "Take this money and eat *lai*."

"What shall I do with this?" said Navadwip.

Ananda Babu did not understand what he meant. He threw a four *anna bit*¹ near him and said, "Purchase *lai* with this and eat."

Navadwip did not even look at the silver coin. He laughed and came away. Ananda Babu kept wondering and looking at him till he was out of sight. He went to the court as usual, but the mystic figure of Navadwip Das continued to persevere in his mind.

Two days later at about 8 o'clock in the morning Navadwip Das again went to the house of Ananda Babu singing "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama*." He was busy examining some papers in his office. As soon as he heard Navadwip Das singing he said to a servant, "Call that maniac." The servant obeyed. Navadwip Das went in and stood before Ananda Babu. Ananda Babu asked him with a smile to sit down on the chair. Navadwip sat down. Ananda Babu asked, "What is your name?"

¹ One quarter of a rupee.

Navadwip: People call me Navadwip Das.

Ananda: Where do you live?

Navadwip: I am a beggar. I do not have a fixed place to live. I live wherever I find shelter.

Ananda: Where and what do you eat?

Navadwip: I eat wherever I get something to eat.

Ananda Babu threw a rupee coin before him and said, "Take this. You wanted to eat *lai*. You can eat."

Navadwip Das got up and began to leave, saying, "I want *lai* and you give me rupee. What shall I do with the rupee?"

Ananda Babu said entreatingly, "Well, well, I will get *lai* for you. Please sit down."

"I will come some other time" said Navadwip Das and left, singing "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama*." The rupee lay untouched where it was.

Ananda Babu began to think, "I wonder—what kind of man he is. He is a beggar, but he does not accept money. I thought he was mad, but from his conversation it appears that there is nothing wrong with him. He appears to be a Vaishnava, but he is very much unlike the ordinary Vaishnavas. I do not know why he comes to me. He says, 'Give me something to eat' but he does not want to eat anything except *lai*. Twice he came and went back without eating."

Three or four days went by. One evening Ananda Babu was sitting in the verandah outside his house on an easy chair and smoking *hukka*, when Navadwip Das came singing "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama*." Ananda Babu was happy. He said, "Come, come, I have been just thinking of you." He asked the servant to bring another chair. Navadwip sat down on the chair. Ananda Babu said, "Gosain,¹ tell me what you have in mind today."

¹ Holy person.

Navadwip: I have come to eat *lai* as I promised that day.

Ananda: Why *lai*? Why not eat something else?

Navadwip: No, no. If you can give *lai*, I shall eat, otherwise I go.

Ananda: Very well, I shall give you *lai*.

Ananda Babu asked the servant to go and bring *lai*. Then he said, "Gosain, I wonder why you come to me. Obviously you do not come for *lai*. Tell me why you come."

Navadwip: Why do you go to the court?

Ananda Babu felt somewhat offended. A small fry he, asking a reputed lawyer a silly question, he felt. In the same strain he said, "Do you come to me for the same purpose, for which I go to the court?"

Navadwip: You are an educated person. Your science says that everything is bound by the same Law of Uniformity. If that is true then, is it not possible that I come to you for the same purpose for which you go to the court?

Ananda: I could not follow.

Navadwip: Perhaps you do not believe in God. But you believe in science and the laws of science. According to science the law, according to which the sun, the moon and the stars, moving along their course, remain fixed in their position, is the same as the law according to which the leaves of the trees fall on the ground. This is called the law of gravitation. Isn't that so?

Ananda: Yes.

Navadwip: Now suppose you are like the sun or the moon, because you are a big lawyer. You earn so much money and you have so many servants, who are always at your beck and call. I am like the leaf of a tree, a beggar, who goes a-begging for his food. You are so great, I am so small. Is it not possible that both of us are going about our respective business in the world for the same purpose?

Ananda Babu's face reddened. He said curtly, "I go to the court for money. Do you also come to me for the same purpose?"

Navadwip: You are mistaken. You do not go to the court for money. Money is only a means to the end. What do you want money for?

Ananda: I want money to spend on things that will make me and my family happy.

Navadwip: So happiness is the end. You go to the court for the sake of happiness. I also come to you for the sake of happiness. It makes me happy to come and sing *Harinama* to you and to tell you, if you want to listen to me, that the happiness I enjoy or aim at is qualitatively far superior to the happiness enjoyed by you.

Ananda Babu frowned. He thought how could a beggar, who had to depend for his meals upon others be happier than a person who had plenty to feed himself and others and to enjoy all the different kinds of pleasure the world had to offer. He could not, however, dismiss the idea as the figment of the imagination of a lunatic, because he was by now convinced that Navadwip Das was neither a lunatic, nor an ignorant or illiterate person, who simply indulged in tall talk, but a wise man, to whom one must listen before disbelieving. He said, "Gosain, I must take what you have said with a grain of salt. You have to substantiate it."

Navadwip: You see, the happiness you are after is mixed with pain and transient. The happiness, we *sadhus* aim at is unmixed with pain. It is everlasting and ever growing. What you call happiness is sensuous pleasure, not happiness. It makes you the slave of the senses. It makes you sink lower and lower in the scale of existence, till you find yourself in hell. What we regard as happiness pertains to the soul, not to the body or the senses. It is a sign of liberation rather than of bondage. It is the natural concomitant of a pious life dedicated in entirety

to the service of the Lord, the fountain-head of all happiness.

This led to a number of questions regarding the existence of God, the nature of the soul, life after death, the law of karma and heaven and hell. A long discussion spread over a number of sittings that followed. Slowly Ananda Babu was weaned out of his materialistic leanings. It dawned upon him that man had a higher destiny than the sensuous and sinful life he had been leading, that there was a God to whom he was responsible for his actions, and that his consignment to the worst kind of hell for all the sins he had committed was certain, if he did not make proper amends. He had possibly heard of God, heaven and hell even before, but never was he so convinced about them as now. It was obviously due to the spiritually most powerful company of Navadwip Das, who went about seeking the fallen souls and forcibly pulling them out of the mire of *Maya*.

So in a deeply penitent mood he fell at his feet, with tears profusely streaming out of his eyes and said, "Dada! You have come to me as my saviour. You have aroused me from my slumber. I have been running fast towards the well of destruction. You have opened my eyes. Now you must tell me what I should do. I surrender myself at your feet." Navadwip Dada asked him to have patience till he surrendered him at the feet of his own Dada, Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva.

After the devotee sent by Ananda Babu had thus briefly narrated to Baba Mahashaya the story of his transformation, he requested him to accompany him to Cuttack to bless the fallen soul and do what was necessary for his liberation.

Baba Mahashaya started for Cuttack the next day along with a number of disciples and companions. At the station the aforesaid devotee told Baba Mahashaya that Ananda Babu had asked him to purchase second class tickets for everyone. Baba Mahashaya said, "Baba, we are all beggars.

It is no use posing big while we are in the train. You should purchase tickets for the lowest class." So third class tickets were purchased for everyone. As soon as they had boarded the train Baba Mahashaya started *kirtan*.

Ananda Babu had no information about the day and time of the arrival of Baba Mahashaya. But prompted in his heart by some invisible *shakti* he reached the station at proper time to receive Baba Mahashaya and his party.

It was the practice of Baba Mahashaya to board the train after everyone had got in and to get down after everyone had got down. As soon as the train reached Cuttack station his men started getting down. Ananda Babu bowed down to each of them.

Navadwip Das and the devotees stood aside watching Ananda Babu. Navadwip Das wanted to test how far the eagerness and devotion of Ananda Babu was genuine. They thought that if Ananda Babu had genuinely accepted Baba Mahashaya as his guru, he should have no difficulty in recognizing him.

So it happened. As soon as Baba Mahashaya got down Ananda Babu fell at his feet and began to weep aloud saying, "Baba! Save me. There is no one in this world I can call my own except you. I know that none of my kith and kin, for whom I have worked day and night and earned so much money by fair or foul means, will share my sins. If you do not show mercy on me, I am doomed. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him and said, "Fear not my brother, since all merciful Nitai Chand is there. Let us go to your house."

Baba Mahashaya, Ananda Babu, Lalita Dasi and Kusum-manjari Dasi sat in one carriage, others in other carriages. Ananda Babu sat at the feet of Baba Mahashaya and began to wash them with the tears of his eyes and say, "Baba! I cannot say how many sins I have committed. I have been a meat-eater,

a drunkard and a debauch. I have spoiled the chastity of so many women and cheated so many people. I have worked against my own client by accepting money from the opponent. I had not believed till now that there was someone above me, who would sit in judgment upon me and I shall be punished for all my deeds. Navadwip Das has opened my eyes. I have begun to hate myself just as everyone else hates me. Even Nitai-Gaura will close Their eyes to see me. My only hope lies in your lotus feet. Kindly have mercy on me."

Ananda Babu was thus weeping and wailing. Baba Mahashaya was reclining on the back of his seat, while his feet were held by Ananda Babu close to his heart. He was listening to the penitential outpourings of his heart with eyes half-closed. At intervals his body trembled and he shouted "*Jai Nitai! Jai Nitai!*" When Ananda Babu completely broke down he said, "Ananda Babu, you need not be so restless. In this age of Kali no one shall be debarred from the mercy of the Lord. For Nitai-Gaura shower Their mercy on all, without taking into account their faults. You give me all the sins you have committed in this life and the lives that have passed and take shelter under Their feet with a pure heart." So saying he locked Ananda Babu in his arms and sat still. His entire body became so dark and lustreless that it was difficult to recognize him.

After a short while the carriage stopped in front of Ananda Babu's house. Baba Mahashaya got down. Navadwip Das saw his darkened body. He understood what had happened. He shouted "*Ha Nitai! Jai Nitai!*" and began to dance in ecstasy. Baba Mahashaya caught his right hand with his left hand and both began to dance together. Others came with *khol* and *karatal*s and began to do *kirtan*. Adroit Navadwip Das, dancing with Baba Mahashaya, ingeniously took him inside the house along with the *kirtan*.

Neighbours heard the sound of *kirtan* and came running to

Ananda Babu's house. They saw Ananda Babu dancing in the midst of *kirtan* with both of his arms raised and tears incessantly flowing from his eyes. "What a surprise!" they said, "Ananda Babu was a terror to the *sadhus* and Vaishnavas. They dared not go near his house. Today not only the Vaishnavas-*sadhus* are doing *kirtan* in his house, he is himself dancing in their midst like a devout Vaishnava!" Someone said "That *sadhu*, who is looking like a lunatic, I saw him, coming to Ananda Babu's house a number of times. Possibly the change in Ananda Babu is due to his company." Some said "Look at that tall *mahapurusha* with arms reaching up to the knees, dancing in ecstasy and Ananda Babu praying and weeping and rolling at his feet. It must be due to his mercy that he is suddenly changed from a sinner into saint."

Kirtan continued for a long time. After that everyone took *mahaprasada* and retired for rest. Ananda Babu was passing his days happily in the company of Baba Mahashaya. So long as Baba stayed in his house he did not go to the court. He would often sit near Baba Mahashaya, hold his feet close to his chest and weep like a child. One day he said to Baba, "Baba! You will have to give me *diksha-mantra*."

Babaji: You need not be impatient. Everything happens according to the will of Nitai Chand. You will get the *mantra* at the proper time.

Ananda: Baba! Death does not wait for time. I may die before the proper time comes. Kindly be merciful and give me the *mantra* today.

Baba Mahashaya only wanted to test his eagerness. He said, "Very well, you will get the *mantra* tomorrow."

The next day Baba Mahashaya gave him *mantra* amidst *kirtan*. The fire of penitence had already burnt the shrubby growth of unhealthy *samskaras* in his heart and penitential tears had washed it clean. Therefore, the seed of the *mantra*

sprouted at once. The *ashta-sattvika-bhavas* appeared on his body. He stood up and began to dance in *kirtan*. As he danced trembling of the body and horripilation were so severe that they could not be controlled. He fell senseless on the ground. Even in the unconscious state tears constantly streamed out of his eyes and his body trembled like the leaves of a tree in storm. After sometime Baba Mahashaya held both of his hands and began to dance. Ananda Babu danced with him like one under the charm of a spell. Navadwip Das also began to dance in ecstasy and shout "Jai Nitai!" Everyone was surprised to see this and was reminded of the deliverance of Jagai-Madhai by Mahaprabhu.

Ananda Babu was now a completely changed man. He had shaved his head and worn *kanthi* and *tilaka*. He had removed all the old pictures from his drawing-room and replaced them by the pictures of Radha-Krishna, Gaura-Nitai and Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva. No more he was a terror to *sadhus* and *Vaishnavas*, whom he used to chastise as hypocrites. Now whenever he saw a *Vaishnava* or a *sadhu* he respectfully bowed down to him and asked what service he could render to him. He accepted only those cases from his clients, which were based on truth and told them that if at any stage he found anything untrue he would give up the case.

Baba Mahashaya had to stay in his house for a month, because every time he wanted to leave Ananda Babu wept and requested him to stay on a few more days. When ultimately he left for Puri, he wanted to go with him, for he said he could not live without him. Baba Mahashaya, however, soothed him by his sweet words and asked him to go to Puri later for sometime.

THEY CAME TO RESCUE, BUT WERE CAUGHT

One day at about 12 a.m. a young man came to Jhanjapita

Math, made obeisance to Baba Mahashaya and sat down before him. Baba Mahashaya asked, "What is your name?"

Young man: My name is Anathabandhu Das.

Babaji: Where do you live?

Anath: Calcutta, Bhavanipura.

Babaji: Are you in service?

Anath: No, I have passed B.A. But I do not know what I am going to do. Just now my Gurudeva Sri Dinabandhu Kavyatirtha has sent me here, because his third brother has renounced the world and is living here with you. I have come to take him away. Are you the owner of this Ashram?

Babaji: You are an educated person. You should not say like this, because the *jiva* is only a servant, a tool in the hands of God. He cannot be the owner.

Anath: Why, does he not have the freedom of will and the power to act?

Babaji: He is an infinitesimal part of God. Whatever little power or freedom he seems to have is strictly controlled by Him. It only appears that he is the master of himself and can do what he likes. But he is really entirely dependent upon Him. He cannot, for instance stop the teeth from growing when they begin to grow, or stop them from falling when they begin to fall. He cannot prolong his youth or old age at his will. He cannot do what he wants to do, if God wills otherwise. He plans to do a certain things, but if death comes all his plans come to naught.

Anath: Well, tell me one thing. Is it not possible to do *bhajan* while living as a householder in the world?

Babaji: Who says it is not possible?

Anath: Then why have you renounced the world?

Babaji: I have renounced, because as a *vairagi*¹ I get name and fame and plenty to eat without doing anything.

¹ One who has renounced the world.

Anath felt somewhat humiliated. He said, "Well, leave aside yourself. Why have a number of persons in your Ashram, who are young like myself, renounced? If they had not renounced, they could have rendered service to their parents and to society."

Babaji: The Lord's will is supreme. If the Lord wills a certain person to do something he cannot do anything else. You have come here to make a man give up *vairagya*¹ and go home with you. But if his *vairagya* is genuine, instead of going home with you he can make you renounce home and go with him on his path.

Anath: I shall never go on his path. My Gurudeva does not favour *sannyasa*.

Next morning, when Baba Mahashaya went to Jagannath Temple Anathbandhu accompanied him. In the temple Baba Mahashaya started *kirtan*. The song he sang in *kirtan* dealt with subjects like the purpose of human life, the excellence of the path of *bhakti*, *vairagya* and *sadhu-sanga*. Each song made a deep impression upon Anath's pure heart. It seemed to penetrate it like an arrow and destroy his old *samskaras*. He was transported into such ecstasy that he felt he could not leave the company of Baba Mahashaya even for a moment. When the *kirtan* was over he fell at Baba Mahashaya's feet and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya lifted him and gave him a loving embrace. He said, "Baba! Have mercy on me. I have realized my mistake. I will not go back to the world of *Maya*. Kindly give me shelter under your feet. I cannot leave your company. I regard your company itself as the highest end of my life." On his insistence Baba Mahashaya gave him the *mantra* of Gaura-Nitai. Sometime later he requested Baba Mahashaya to give him *vairagya-vesh*. Baba

¹ Renunciation.

Mahashaya desisted in the beginning but on his further insistence he gave him *vesh* and the name Atal Bihari Das. How strange! He had come to take a man, who had renounced the world, back into his world, but himself renounced the world and remained with him to serve the Guru and the Vaishnavas. Such was the miraculous effect of a moment's company of the great Babaji Mahashaya.

One day Baba Mahashaya asked Atal Das, "Have you informed Dinabandhuji about your *vairagya-vesh*?

Atal: No, I think it is best not to inform anyone. To inform is to invite trouble.

Babaji: The *vairagya* of a person, who assumes *vairagya-vesh* secretly and is afraid of the difficulties that may arise if others come to know about it, cannot last. You should inform your guru of your *vairagya*, apologize to him and ask for his blessings. That will give you strength.

Atal Das wrote to inform his guru. Soon came his brother Haripada Babu to take Atal Das and Dinabandhu's third brother back to Calcutta. But he was also imbued with *vairagya* on meeting Baba Mahashaya and said to him, "Baba, I will not go back home. I would rather go on pilgrimage as a first step towards final renunciation." So he went on pilgrimage.

Dinabandhu was mystified. He said to himself, "I wonder what happens to the man whom I send to bring my brother. He never returns. This time I will go myself to see what the mystery is."

Dinabandhu went to Puri. He met Babaji Mahashaya, Atal Das and his brother. He was so much impressed that instead of asking his brother and Atal Das to go back with him, he blessed them both and went back alone after staying in the Math for four or five days.

Baba Mahashaya had so captured his heart that he always thought of him. If his mother blamed Baba Mahashaya for the

vairagya of her son, he at once retorted, "Ma! You do not know. If you ever see that *mahapurusha*, you will consider your son fortunate to have found shelter under his feet. I have travelled throughout the country, but I have never seen a saint like him. He has such immense *shakti* that the moment a man sees him, he forgets everything of the world and craves to take shelter under his feet and never to leave his company. I do not know when I will see him again and be blessed by his *darshan*."

SAKHYA-BHAVA OF GOVINDA DADA

Both Govinda Dada and Navadwip Dada had *sakhya* (friendly) *bhava* towards Baba Mahashaya. This is borne out by an interesting episode, which is as follows:

According to the instructions of Baba Mahashaya the daily routine of his companions in the Jhanjapita Math was *trisandhya-kirtan* (*kirtan* in the morning, noon and evening), sea-bath, Jagannath *darshan* and *kirtan* before Jagannath. *Madhukari-bhiksha* for the Math was usually done by Madhu Dada. But sometimes Baba Mahashaya asked others as well to go for *bhiksha*.¹ One day he called Navadwip Dada and Govinda Dada and said, "Both of you go for *bhiksha* in the lanes and by-lanes of the city and on your return give everything you get in *bhiksha* to me." So, everyday they went for *bhiksha* and on their return gave the bag containing *bhiksha* to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya bowed down to the bag, and put it over his head as something most sacred and valuable before he gave it to Lalita Dasi for cooking. This continued for a number of days. One day, as Navadwip and Govinda returned from *bhiksha*, chanting the Name, Baba Mahashaya came out of his room and took the bag containing the *bhiksha* from the hands of Govinda.

¹ On special occasions Baba Mahashaya himself went out for *bhiksha*.

As he did so humorous Govinda Dada, animated by *sakhya-rasa* (friendly sentiment) showered a volley of abuses upon him and went and sat down in the *pangat-ghar* (dining room). Everyone in the Math was surprised to hear this. Baba Mahashaya remained listening quietly and amazedly with the bag held over his head. After sometime he went to the *pangat-ghar* and said to Govinda Dada, "Govinda! Have you gone mad?"

Govinda: Why? What has happened?

Babaji: Why did you deliver abuses while surrendering the *bhiksha*?

Govinda: The abuses were given to me by the people to whom I had gone for *bhiksha*. You had enjoined that whatever I got in *bhiksha* I must deliver to you. I delivered to you rice, pulses and the other things I got. How could I keep the abuses with me? If I did, it would have been difficult for me to digest them. They could have aroused in my mind the feeling of hatred or anger against the people, who abused me. So, I delivered them to you."

Baba Mahashaya expressed happiness at Govinda's attitude of intimate and loving friendliness, free from fear or hesitation, by smiling and giving him a loving embrace.

OFFENSE AGAINST HARINAMA

One day, when Navadwip Das and Govinda Dada were going for *bhiksha* through a lane adjoining the royal palace, chanting *Harinama* as usual, the guard on duty at the palace shouted, "O Baba! Chanting *Harinama* in this area is prohibited. Go away from here." Navadwip Dada smiled and said, "Why Baba? Does not the rule and order of Yama (the regent of death) prevail here? *Harinama* is effective against Yama." He said this and continued to chant. The guard vituperated and threatened to beat them. Still they continued chanting, caring

little for his threat, and chanting came out of the lane.

The Lord may tolerate an offense committed against His own Self, but He cannot tolerate the offense committed against His Name or His devotees. Soon after this episode cholera broke out in Puri and it affected most the area in and around the palace, so much so that the Maharaja himself fell prey to it. He called his guru Sripad Raghunath Deva Goswami and his minister Kali Babu and said, "I am laid up with cholera, medicines have proved ineffective. I do not know what to do." Raghunath Deva Goswami said, "If medicines have failed, the only other remedy is *Harinama*. I have seen that on two or three occasions, when an epidemic broke out in Puri, it disappeared as soon as Sri Radharamana Charan Das Deva went round the city performing *nama-kirtan* with his companions. I believe that if he performs *kirtan* in the palace, you will soon recover." Kali Babu said the same. The Maharaja asked them both to go and request Baba Mahashaya on his behalf to kindly come and grace the palace by his presence and the *kirtan* of the Holy Name.

They went and conveyed his request to Baba Mahashaya and insisted on his accompanying them to the palace with his companions immediately. Baba Mahashaya complied. The night had already fallen when he reached the palace with his party singing: "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna Hare Rama*." The employees of the palace came out with two torches and escorted them to the room where the Maharaja was lying. The Maharaja asked his attendants to help him go in the midst of the *kirtan*. His mother objected, but he did not listen. With the help of his two attendants he went and bowed down to the *kirtan*-party and then stood aside. Baba Mahashaya and his party encircled him and began to move round him singing and dancing. The Maharaja felt inspired and energized by the *kirtan*. He raised his arms and began to dance

himself. Tears constantly flowed from his eyes and his face was radiant. It appeared that he had drunk deep of the nectar of the Divine Name and was in ecstasy. After sometime Baba Mahashaya clasped the Maharaja in his arms and began to dance with him. The rest of his party and the employees of the palace all danced round them, singing and clapping their hands with the beats of *khol* and *karatal*, while Navadwip Das leaped and jumped shouting aloud "Jai Nitai! jai Nitai!" The shouts of "Haribol" also rent the sky from time to time. The whole palace seemed to have gone into ecstasy. When Babaji Mahashaya left the Maharaja, he was in tears and the *sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body. He said, "I am blest. My illness has proved a blessing in disguise. All that was evil in me is gone for ever." He then asked one of his men to take the *sankirtan*-party in and around each room of the palace. He did the same. When the *sankirtan* was over, the Maharaja rolled on the ground to purify his body with the dust of the feet of the Vaishnavas. He then requested Baba Mahashaya to bless him thus by performing *kirtan* at the palace everyday. Baba Mahashaya Said, "We shall do as Nitai Chand wills." He returned to his Ashram at 11:30 p.m. dancing and singing with his companions.

The Maharaja did not take any medicine thereafter, yet he was fully cured. He sent his men every day to bring Baba Mahashaya and his party to the palace for *kirtan*.

The party continued the *sankirtan* for seven days, but Baba Mahashaya accompanied it only for two more days. From that time onwards the employees of the palace did not obstruct any one from chanting the Name.

CHAPTER 25

SECOND VISIT TO CALCUTTA

Babaji Mahashaya started for Calcutta along with his companions, leaving only a few in Jhanjapita Math for the service of Sri Radhakanta. On the way he stopped at Cuttack for a few days. This time he wanted to stay in Cuttack independently. So he did not inform any of the persons already known to him. As soon as he got down from the station, he began to inquire about some place outside the city, where he could stay. Someone told him that there was a house near the cremation ground, which was always vacant because it was supposed to be haunted by ghosts. He went and stayed there.

Next morning they went out for *nagara-kirtan* and returned at 11 a.m. They were thinking of making some arrangement for their food, when some people arrived with provisions sufficient for fifty persons. The provisions could easily last for two days. But it was Baba Mahashaya's practice not to store anything for the next day. So, all the provisions were cooked and what remained after eating was distributed among the poor. On other days they lived on *madhukari*.

Many people came to Babaji Mahashaya every day and asked him many questions. Most of them were college teachers and students. Baba Mahashaya answered their questions to their satisfaction. Many came to listen to his *kirtans* and

participate in them. The cremation ground wore a festive look as long as Baba Mahashaya stayed there.

DELIVERANCE OF MADANAMOHAN

One day Madanamohan, the younger son of Sri Pyarimohan Dutta was struck by lightning while he was playing with other boys outside his house. He fell unconscious on the ground. His eyes turned upwards, teeth clinched and the body became blue. The boys went and informed his parents. The parents were appalled. They did not know what to do. Some people advised them to call the doctor, some said the boy was dead. But Madanamohan's elder brother Durga Prasada hired a carriage and ran to Barha Babaji Mahashaya. Barha Baba came. Madana's parents laid Madana at his feet and said, "Baba! We offer our Madana at your feet. You do with him what you like."

Barha Babaji Mahashaya closed his eyes for a while and thought. His body trembled. He lifted and embraced Madana and shouted "*Jai Nitai!*" Madana regained consciousness. He fell at the feet of Barha Baba Mahashaya. Barha Baba again embraced him.

Many people who had gathered at the spot, were surprised to see the *shakti* of Babaji Mahashaya. They said, "The boy is fortunate, for Baba Mahashaya seems to have accepted him and delivered him from death for ever."

Baba Mahashaya did not stay in Cuttack any longer. Disappointing Ananda Babu and many others, who insisted on his staying longer, he proceeded to Calcutta.

In Calcutta he went straight to the house of Kunja Babu and Pulin Babu. But he stayed there only for a couple of days after which he said to Kunja Babu, "This time I want to stay

independently in some solitary place. You take me to the garden house of your uncle Batu Mama."

Kunja Babu took him to the garden of Batu Mama. On his starting *kirtan* in the garden many people started coming. One of his companions said to him, "You came here because of solitude. But are you not yourself inviting crowds by your *kirtan*?"

Baba said, I do not shun crowd. I can always live amongst people, but what I want is independence. Dependence on the hospitality of other persons obstructs the flow of Krishna-*lila* in one's mind. According to Mahaprabhu solitude alone will not do. Independence is necessary."

One day Kamakhya Das Babaji of Baranagara came to Baba Mahashaya along with another gentleman. Introducing him to Baba Mahashaya he said, "His name is Prasanna Kumara Raibahadur. He is a rich man and a great favourite of the governor of Bengal. Sometime back he heard *Harinama-kirtan* from Rama Das Baba. Since then he has turned to *bhakti*. Today he came to know that you are here. So he has come for your *darshan*."

Baba Mahashaya: It is very kind of him to have come.

Prasanna: Baba! I am a hypocrite and a sinner. I have become old, still there is no change in me. But with the grace of Rama Das Babaji I have come to know that there is such a thing as God. Kindly bless me so that my faith in God remains firm and pull me out of the mire of *Maya*, otherwise I am doomed. No one else can help me.

Babaji: My brother! In this age of Kali no one will remain without the benefaction of Nitai Chand. You have no reason to fear.

Prasanna: It is my request that you may kindly do me the favour of living in my garden, not very far from here.

Babaji: I have no objection. I will happily go wherever Nitai Chand carries me.

Baba Mahashaya shifted to the garden of Prasanna Babu. The garden was spacious. On one side of the garden there was a big building, on the other side a pond. There was a separate kitchen-house and beautiful flowers bloomed all round. Baba Mahashaya was made to stay in a big hall of the garden-house, which had wooden floor. The servant told Baba Mahashaya, "Many English men and women have danced in the hall and the garden has been the pleasure-ground of the English men. Now by your grace this hall and the garden will resound with the *kirtan* of the Holy Name of the Lord."

Prasanna Babu said to Baba Mahashaya, "This garden is yours. I am also yours. You live here happily. All your needs will be fulfilled by the servants. You have only to tell them what you need."

INITIATION OF PRASANNA BABU

Everyday a large number of people came to Baba Mahashaya to attend his *kirtan* and discourses, during which Prasanna Babu was always present. One day Baba Mahashaya asked Prasanna Babu, "I find that you are always present here these days. Are you not neglecting your business and suffering great loss?"

Prasanna Babu said, "I have done business all my life and earned a lot of money. But I have always neglected what I have now come to know is the only purpose of my life. I realize that I have suffered a loss, which cannot be compensated by any amount of wealth. I cannot suffer the loss any more. You will have to give me *mantra* and set me on the right path. I surrender myself completely at your feet. There is no one else in this world, whom I regard as my own. Tell me when you are going to bless me with the *mantra*."

As Prasanna Babu said this he fell at Baba Mahashaya's feet and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him. He tried to console him by his sweet words. But words would not console him. He said, "Gurudeva! Time is passing. Life is uncertain. If I die the next moment, I do not know what will happen to me. I may be consigned to the worst kind of hell. You must promise to give me the *mantra* tomorrow."

Baba Mahashaya's heart melted. He said, "Very well, let Nitai's will be done."

The next day Prasanna Babu was duly initiated at his house. Baba Mahashaya's companions performed *kirtan* at the time of initiation. As soon as Prasanna Babu received the *mantra*, tremor and horripilation appeared all over his body. Overwhelmed with emotion he began to weep and say, "Gurudeva! No one in this world is more sinful than I. My deliverance is even more difficult than that of Jagai and Madhai. Bless me so that I may not fall again."

Baba Mahashaya embraced him and said, "Always chant the Name. Name alone can deliver the *jivas* from *Maya* in this age of Kali."

Prasanna: I am always impure. How can I chant the Name?

Babaji: Name does not reckon purity or impurity, fitness or unfitness, caste or creed, time or place. It destroys all impurities of the heart just as fire destroys all impurities of iron.

After thus comforting Prasanna Babu Baba Mahashaya went and joined the *kirtan*. After the *kirtan* was over everyone sat down for *mahaprasada*. In joyful mood Baba Mahashaya said to his two companions Advaita and Radhavinoda, "Both of you sing while we are taking *prasada*. Advaita Das, you sing in praise of Gaura and Radhavinoda will sing in praise of Nitai. Let us see who wins. The defeated person will carry the winner on his shoulder to the garden." Both began to sing with great zest and enthusiasm. Every verse they sang filled the atmosphere with

bhava and seemed to send Baba Mahashaya into ecstasy. Baba Mahashaya had hardly eaten one or two morsels of *mahaprasada*, when he entered into a state of trance, in which both of his hands were raised and his eyes had reddened. He wanted to sing, but he could not move his lips. Horripilation and tremor appeared all over the body. He remained in that state for sometime. Then he began to sing the verse:

"*Nitai gunamani, amara Nitai gunamani,
amiya premer banya bhasalo avani.*"

—O our Nitai, the treasure of all divine qualities!
He brought the flood of divine love and made the world float in it."

As he sang this verse he was so overwhelmed with emotion that he began to roll on the ground, covered with *pattals* on which *mahaprasada* was served. His companions tried to contain him, but could not. Navadwip Das asked Advaita Das, Radhavinoda Das and others to sing that verse more loudly. The verse continued to be sung to the accompaniment of *khol* and *karatal* for an hour and a half, after which Baba Mahashaya came to his own. His whole body was smeared with *mahaprasada*. *Mahaprasada* was served again and everyone sat down to eat.

INITIATION OF DINABHANDU KAVYATIRTHA VEDANTARATNA

We have said before that Dinabandhu Das had gone to Puri to persuade his brother and two others, who had taken Vaishnava *sannyasa* from Babaji Mahashaya, to give up *sannyasa* and go back with him to Calcutta, but had returned satisfied that they had taken shelter under a *mahapurusha*, the like of whom he had never seen. One evening he came again to meet Baba Mahashaya, who was then sitting outside in the garden. Baba Mahashaya was happy to see him. He welcomed him with

usual warmth and love and asked him what had brought him there. He replied that he was going to some other place, where he was to deliver a lecture, but he did not know how he was suddenly drawn to him. What seemed to worry him at that time was the concept and the necessity of the guru. So he asked a number of questions. He said, "The *shastras* declare that Bhagavan and the Guru are the same. If Bhagavan is the Guru, what is the necessity of having another guru?"

Babaji: The necessity is obvious. From your birth you depend on the guru, who comes to you in some form or the other to guide and help you. At the time of your birth he appears in the form of the mother, who teaches you how to suck her breast. When you grow old the guru in the form of your parents and elders teaches you many things, which are necessary for your well-being. The guidance of the guru is necessary every moment of our life and in whatever we do.

Dinabandhu asked many other questions regarding the necessity and the qualification of a *mantra*-guru. Baba Mahashaya answered them to his satisfaction. When all his doubts were removed he became impatient to receive the *mantra* from Baba Mahashaya.

As we have said before it was not so much the argument of Baba Mahashaya that convinced the people of the truth, as his powerful personality, which was the very embodiment of truth. Slightest contact with him made all doubts and misconceptions regarding the nature of truth which obstructed their vision, vanish automatically, just as darkness vanishes automatically with the slightest appearance of the rays of the rising sun. The greatest obstacle in the realization of truth is self-conceit. The vision of Dinabandhu Das was blurred because of his pride of learning and probably the pride of Brahminhood. His contact with Baba Mahashaya in Puri had already humbled him to a great extent. If any trace of conceit had remained that

also was now gone. Self-purification had given rise to self-mortification and he had begun to feel that he had only wasted his time in scholarly pursuits. Nothing would now give peace to his mind except total surrender at the feet of Baba Mahashaya.

In the evening, when he was attending the *kirtan* going on in the hall, he happened to see the picture of *Pancha-tattva*, the five divines, Whose hearts are always filled with mercy for the fallen souls, and he began to sing a song praying for Their mercy in the form of the guru. He sang and danced and wept like a child and singing fell unconscious on the ground. Baba Mahashaya, who was watching him from a distance, came and put his hand upon his chest. The touch made him conscious. He clasped Baba's feet with both of his hands and began to weep and say, "Gurudeva! Have mercy on me!" Baba Mahashaya tried to calm him by giving a loving embrace, but he continued to cry and say, "Gurudeva! Have mercy on me. Give me *mantra* in my ear. I am sold out to you. From today I am yours. You do with me what you like."

Baba Mahashaya was moved. He hugged him again and uttered the *mantra* in his ear. Each letter of the *mantra* caused tremor and horripilation in his body. Streams of tears began to flow from his eyes and drench his cheeks and chest. As soon as the *mantra* was completed Baba Mahashaya left him and he fell unconscious on the ground, still and motionless like a doll. Babaji Mahashaya was also overpowered by *bhava*. Navadwip Das and others took him outside in the verandah. Some people remained inside the hall to chant *Harinama* near Dinabandhu. Others began to chant near Baba Mahashaya. The intensity of *sattvika-bhavas* that appeared on his body surprised everyone. Tremor was so intense that no one could hold his body and keep it still. Even the teeth trembled so vigorously that it appeared they would fall. Horripilation was so intense that his whole body appeared like *shimul* (silk-cotton) tree. With eyes closed

and throat choked with emotion he uttered the word 'gopi' for about five minutes and then began to say, "I am gopi, I am gopi." Tremor did not stop till late at night. Lalita Dasi became anxious. She wept and said to Navadwip Das, "Dada! You must somehow stop his tremor. If it lasts longer, I am afraid, all his teeth will fall out." Navadwip Das closed his eyes and meditated for sometime. Then he touched Baba Mahashaya's back with his right hand. The touch made him conscious. He said, "Jai Nitai! Jai Nitai!" and began to look all round in a manner, which indicated that he was transported to a different place from where he had been.

Navadwip Das then went to the hall, where Dinabandhu Das was still lying unconscious. *Nama-kirtan* was going on round him, but his body was still and motionless. Navadwip Das sent for Baba Mahashaya. As soon as Baba Mahashaya came, he held his right foot and planted it over the chest of Dinabandhu Das. There was some motion in Dinabandhu's body and tears started flowing from his eyes. He caught hold of Baba's foot and began to adjure and supplicate in deep emotion. Baba Mahashaya embraced him lovingly to assuage him.

Another day, when Baba Mahashaya was strolling in the garden, he said to Lalita Dasi, "Dinabandhu is in a quandary. He thinks that the *Gaura-mantra* he has received is grammatically incorrect and wants to correct it. What a pity! He does not know that the *mantra* and Bhagavan are one and therefore the *mantra* is beyond understanding and cannot be subjected to manipulation by human intelligence. May God bless him."

A little later Dinabandhu Das arrived. He made obeisance to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him. They sat down and talked on different subjects. After sometime Lalita Dasi requested them to sit together for *mahaprasada* in Baba Mahashaya's room. She took Dinabandhu Das to his room and made him sit on an *asana*. Baba Mahashaya was yet

to arrive. In the meantime Dinabandhu said to Lalita Dasi, "Is there some grammatical mistake in the Gaura-mantra?"

Lalita Dasi smiled and said, "I do not know. But I hear that Gaura-mantra was given to Baba Mahashaya in a dream by Nityananda Prabhu. Only four or five minutes before you came Baba Mahashaya was telling me, 'Dinabandhu thinks that there is a grammatical mistake in Gaura-mantra and is anxious about its correction.'"

Just then Baba Mahashaya came. Dinabandhu did not say anything to him about the *mantra*. He took *mahaprasada* with him and went home. After four or five days he came again. This time he looked a different person. His face was flushed, eyes swarmed in tears and his dress was awkward. He lay prostrate before Baba Mahashaya as he saw him from a distance. As Baba Mahashaya went forward and extended his hand to lift him, he began to weep aloud like a child and say, "I am a big hypocrite and offender and so full of conceit on account of a little learning that I did not hesitate even to find fault in God in the shape of the *mantra*. Kindly have mercy on me. I have been adequately punished for the offense I committed. If you want to give me some more punishment kindly let me know. I shall gladly submit."

Babaji: Why, what has happened? Let me know.

Dinabandhu: Prabhu! There is nothing that you do not know. Still, if you want, I shall narrate everything. The moment I was initiated I became skeptical about the Gaura-mantra. The little knowledge I have of Sanskrit made me think that it was grammatically incorrect. At the time of doing *japa* the idea of the incorrectness of the *mantra* always haunted my mind. Yesterday night when I slept, the same idea disturbed me. At four o'clock in the morning you came to me. You looked at me angrily, groaned and growled and gave me a slap on my cheek saying, 'Foolish fellow! You have read two pages of

Sanskrit grammar and have become so conceited that you have the courage to find fault with the *mantra* that came out of the mouth of Nityananda Himself! You do not know that *kalap*, *kaumudi*, *mukta-bodh* and other books of Sanskrit grammar that are now current are all imperfect. Only Panini is perfect. In the Veda section of the second part of Panini the usage, which you think is incorrect, has been made at several places and justified. But even if it were not justified, you should know that the Name, the *mantra* and the Lord are self-evident and beyond the jurisdiction of the *shastras* or the application of the rules of grammar.' Thus you kindly punished me and removed my ignorance. Even now you can see the sign of punishment upon my cheek." With this he fell at the feet of Baba Mahashaya and began to weep.

All those who were present were surprised to hear what Dinabandhu said and to see the sign of the slap on his cheek. Baba Mahashaya got tears in his eyes and with throat choked with emotion said, "Pandit! You are blest. Nityananda showed mercy upon you. He came to you in my form and removed your doubt. Be grateful to Him, not me. Remember Him, and hallow Him and His Name."

Dinabandhu said, "Gurudeva! You may say what you like. But I know that you are my saviour and benefactor and no one else. I have travelled in many countries and met many saints, but I found none so kind and so loving as you, who would unstintingly shower mercy upon anyone despite all his faults and weaknesses. If I had not found a guru like you, I would have remained a beast that I was and my deliverance would have been impossible. Now kindly advise how I should conduct myself so that I make progress on the path you have set me on."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Baba! Man lives by faith. Even in our ordinary life we depend more on faith than on reason. If we did not do so life would be impossible. In matters relating to

God and His *lila* faith must have a much more prominent role, because our limited understanding cannot dabble in matters that are transcendental. So you must have faith in the *shastras*, the *mantras* and the words of the seers, who have realized the truth, if you want to make any progress. You must plunge, if you want to swim. You cannot swim before plunging."

AT THE HOUSE OF JOGENDRANATH MITRA IN DARJIPARHA

After staying in Prasanna Babu's garden for a month Baba Mahashaya expressed his desire to move from there. Prasanna Babu insisted on his staying for at least two more months. Baba Mahashaya said, "A *vairagi* Vaishnava should not stay at one place for long." At this time Sri Jogendranath Mitra came and took him to his house in Darjiparha. There Baba Mahashaya fell ill. A physician was called. He examined and said alarmingly, "You have too much congestion in the chest. You must have complete rest and must not speak."

"How long?" asked Baba Mahashaya.

Physician: It would be better if you rest for six months or at least three months.

Baba Mahashaya: I think I shall go mad if I do not do *kirtan* for three months.

Physician: On my request you must rest for at least one month.

Baba Mahashaya: I shall try as far as possible, if Nitai Chand so wills.

The physician prescribed medicine and went after warning Nityasvarupa and others to see that no one was allowed to meet Baba Mahashaya. Nityasvarupa closed the door of Baba Mahashaya's room and sat outside. He told everyone, who came to see him, that he was ill and was not allowed to talk.

Many people went back, but some insisted that they might be allowed at least to have his *darshan* once. Baba Mahashaya heard their entreaties and shouted, "O, Nityasvarupa! Open the door, or my brain will blow up."

Nityasvarupa went in and said, "The physician has asked you not to talk with anyone for a month." Baba Mahashaya said, "But is this body my own? It is Nitai Chand's. He will use it as He pleases. If the devotees are not allowed to see me He feels hurt. How can I for my own happiness deprive Him of the happiness He feels in helping a devotee through me. Cursed be my selfishness and the desire for my own well-being and happiness. Nitai Chand can take care of me better than I can myself. Do not prevent anyone from coming to me." Nityasvarupa had to obey.

One evening when Baba Mahashaya was sitting in his room, surrounded by Lalita Dasi and others, he said with a start, "Some *mahatma* is coming! Go and see." One of the devotees rushed out. In the meantime a gentleman came in. His dress was most ordinary, but his face was radiant and eyes were wet. His gait indicated that he was the traveller of a world different from our own. As soon as Baba Mahashaya saw him, he said, "Oh, Dada! come." He went forward and embraced him. Both locked each other in their arms and became unconscious. The devotees stood behind surrounding them so that they might not fall. After sometime they came to their own and sat down. The newcomer said, "For a long time I have nourished the desire for your *darshan*. Gaura has kindly fulfilled the desire today. Perhaps you have not been able to recognize me. I am Shishir Kumar Ghosh."¹

¹ A great politician turned Vaishnava, generally revered as a *mahatma*. One of the originators of Indian National Congress and the writer of *Lord Gauranga* and several other books.

Babaji: Dada! Since morning today my mind was not with me. It seemed to have gone out to seek someone and the heart seemed to be impatient to embrace someone. And look at the mercy of the gracious Lord and the design of *Yogamaya*! Only a little while ago I was thinking of you.

Shishir Babu: What made you think of this fallen soul?

Babaji: Nothing in particular. I was only thinking how powerful was Shishir Babu. He could dispatch an orthodox Brahmin and great Pandit abroad!¹ If I meet him I would quarrel with him.

Shishir Babu: Your Thakura (Lord Gauranga) is not so simple and naive as you think. This time He thought of saying good-bye to the Brahmin and the Pandit in Him and going abroad to seek the company of foreigners. What could I do? I have myself lost my caste by keeping company with Him.

They talked in this manner for a long time. They understood each other. It was difficult for others to understand what exactly they meant. But for others it was a surprise and a treat to see the way in which they behaved towards each other. They sometimes laughed, sometimes wept and sometimes *sattvika-bhavas* appeared on their bodies. After sometime Shishir Babu left.

Two or three days later Sri Rasikamohan Vidyabhushan, the eminent writer, who is known for his contribution to Vaishnava literature, came to see Baba Mahashaya along with another Vaishnava. They differed in their views regarding the role of *Yogamaya*. The Vaishnava said that all that happened was the play of *Yogamaya*. Vidyabhushan said that what happened in the phenomenal world was due to *Maya*, while all that

¹ The reference is to *Lord Gauranga* written by Shishir Kumar Gosh for Westerners. In those days orthodox Brahmins thought that if a Brahmin went abroad he lost his caste or social status.

happened in the transcendental world was due to *Yogamaya*. When they sought the opinion of Baba Mahashaya he started *sankirtan* describing the relationship between *Maya* and *Yogamaya* and confirming the standpoint of Vidyabhushan. As the *sankirtan* was going on Shishir Babu came along with his grandson, and began to sing and dance in the *sankirtan*. After the *sankirtan* was over Baba Mahashaya said to Shishir Babu, "I find that when you come here this child often accompanies you. He is fortunate indeed." Shishir Babu said, "When I come to you I forget the world. I bring him with me so that I may not completely forget it and become a recluse." Baba Mahashaya laughed and said, "The Lord does not want you to become a recluse, because He is fulfilling a great mission through you and you have much more to do. May He give you a long life."

During Baba Mahashaya's stay in Darjiparha Shishir Babu often came to him and talked about Krishna-lila. Some times Baba Mahashaya also went to him.

In Darjiparha there lived a young man, named Kevalachandra Chattopadhyaya. He was regarded by the people of Darjiparha as a veritable incarnation of Evil. Every one hated and feared him. He heard about Baba Mahashaya and came to see him one day out of curiosity. He was so much impressed by the *kirtan* of Rama Das Baba and the sweet talks and behaviour of Baba Mahashaya that he began to come every day. Soon a remarkable change came over him. He took *mantra* from Baba Mahashaya and began to wear *kanthi* and *tilaka* and chant *harinama*. At first people thought that this was only a clever device to win the favour of people and further cheat them. But it was not long before they realized that the change was not only in outward form, but in thought, word and deed. What a surprise! Kevalachandra, who, till only a short time before, was a terror to the people of Darjiparha, had suddenly become meek and humble. The man, whose only

function was to torment people had suddenly begun to love and serve them. Baba Mahashaya gave him the new name—'Vijaya,' which means victory. People thought that by so doing he hoisted the flag of victory of *harinama* over evil.

PARTING OF NAVADWIP DAS

For the last seven or eight days Navadwip Das has been staying away from Baba Mahashaya. He stays in the house of Kunja Babu, at a long distance from Darjiparha, where Babaji Mahashaya is staying. He comes to Darjiparha occasionally and meets his godbrothers, but goes back without meeting Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya also does not make any inquiry about him. Baba Mahashaya's other disciples are both surprised and aggrieved to see this. They have the same place in their heart for Navadwip Das as they have for Baba Mahashaya, perhaps even more. They may for once ignore the advice of Baba Mahashaya, but never that of their Navadwip Dada. There cannot be a greater cause for their distress than the absence of Navadwip Dada from their midst. Therefore when Navadwip Dada comes, they surround him and say painfully, "Dada! Have you abandoned us?" Navadwip Das replies, "I have not abandoned you. I cannot abandon you. But your Gurudeva has abandoned me for this life."

The cause of this conflict between the guru and the disciple was their disagreement regarding the guru-principle (*Guru-tattva*). Navadwip Das held that the guru was the highest *tattva*; he was the combined manifestation of Sri Gauranga and Sri Nityananda. For him the service of the guru meant the service of all; the chanting of the Name of the guru meant the chanting of all other Names. Baba Mahashaya held that *Guru-tattva* was undoubtedly one with *Bhagavata-tattva*, but in practice it was necessary to distinguish

one from the other. In case of every other thing too, we must distinguish between the object as perceived and its *tattva*, that is, as the object was in itself. If we did not do that it would end in libertarianism and utter disregard of the *shastras*. The Guru-*tattva* was the most difficult *tattva* to understand. One could worship and relish the Guru-*tattva* according to his own *bhava*, but one must not preach it to others. It was easier to carry on *sadhana* if guru was regarded as a helpful guide rather than as Bhagavan.

Navadwip Das said that if guru was regarded as only a means to the attainment of the End and worshipped only till the End was achieved, that was not Guru-*bhakti* in the proper sense. In reply to this Baba Mahashaya said that since he never denied that Guru-*tattva* and *Bhagavata-tattva* were non-different, he could not blame those who worshipped the guru as such, but he insisted that the kind of worship one adopted must be according to one's *adhikara* or capability. If in all sincerity one felt in the presence of the guru that he was in the presence of Bhagavan Himself, he could worship him as such. But he should not preach that others also should do the same, because in this age of Kali people generally lacked the faith.

In short, Navadwip Das wanted to act and preach freely according to his belief and realization that Babaji Mahashaya was the combined incarnation of Gaura and Nitai, just as Mahaprabhu was the combined incarnation of Krishna and Radha and Nitai was the combined incarnation of Balarama and Ananga Manjari. But Baba Mahashaya was vehemently against this.

This difference between them had been going on for quite sometime. This is obvious from the fact that once, while Babaji Mahashaya was in the garden of Prasanna Babu, he started weeping like a child. When his companions asked him why he wept, he replied, "The wilfulness on account of which

I renounced Surendra, Bhavendra and Devendra has started taking root again. When I remember them my heart breaks. Each one of them was the reservoir of infinite *shakti*. My present companions stand nowhere in comparison to them."

Baba Mahashaya often talked of Surendra, Bhavendra and Devendra, whom he had renounced for the kind of wilfulness, now exhibited by Navadwip Das. Baba Mahashaya's companions sometimes requested him and sometimes Navadwip Das to make up their differences and behave towards each other as before. Baba Mahashaya replied, "What can I do? Navadwip, who always sought satisfaction in my happiness has now begun to seek his own happiness. He would be happy, if he is allowed to present me before the world as an incarnation. Is he still the same old Navadwip?"

Navadwip Das replied, "What can I do? Baba Mahashaya, whom I called Dada (elder brother), who was kind and benevolent, loving and lovable like Dada, and who was always merry like a child, has now become so grim and grave and formal in his behaviour towards me. Is he still the same old Dada?"

One day Nityasvarupa, Rama Das, Lalita Sakhi, Pulin Babu and some others decided to make a special request to Babaji Mahashaya to resolve this conflict. They wanted to make Rama Das their mouth-piece. Rama Das said, "If you want me to speak to him, I can speak only through a song." All of them welcomed this idea. At about seven o'clock in the evening they went to Baba Mahashaya's room and closed the door from inside. They sat down near Baba Mahashaya after making obeisance. All was quiet for sometime. Then Rama Das began to sing thus in a grievous and painful tone:

"Is Nava¹ now no one to you Charan²

Erstwhile your heart your soul dear?

¹ Navadwip Das.

² Radharamana Charana Das Deva.

*Why now so cold, so hard on him?
 He lives there afar and you live here?
 We weep and weep to see you thus
 So grin and grave all the while,
 O when, O when shall we see you again
 On your, your own dear Nava smile?"*

Rama Dada's throat was choked with emotion as he sang. Tears streamed out of his eyes. All others also sobbed and wept. Rama Das fell at Baba's feet and bathed them with his tears. Baba Mahashaya was moved. Tears trickled down from his eyes. With choked throat he said, "Well, what should I do?"

Pulin: If you agree I can call Navadwip Das.

Babaji: Where is he?

Pulin: He is at my house.

Babaji: But that is far away.

Pulin: I shall hire a conveyance and bring him at once.

Babaji: Do as you please.

Pulin and Nityasvarupa went to bring Navadwip Das. Navadwip Das resisted. On their insistence, however, he said, "Well, I go. But the result will be contrary."

Rama Das and others were rejoicing on the thought that after so many days the twin souls shall meet and their hearts will dance with joy, when Navadwip Das arrived, accompanied by Pulin, Nityasvarupa and Kunja Das. As soon as Navadwip Das entered the room he bowed down to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya bowed down in return. Both were silent for some time. Others looked now at Baba Mahashaya, now at Navadwip Das. No one had the courage to say anything. After sometime Baba Mahashaya broke the silence by saying, "Do you have to say something?"

Navadwip: Not to you in your present state, when a different Babaji Mahashaya has taken possession of you. I

have nothing to do with yourself in this *bhava*. I am completely and for ever sold out to you in your state as my loving and smiling Dada. I shall say whatever I have to say when he again appears in you.

Babaji: I do not know anything about my present state. I only want to know whether you have anything to say to me now.

Navadwip: I have nothing to say to you just now. But kindly bless that my devotion to you as my erstwhile Dada, at whose feet I have surrendered myself for ever and ever, remains firm as ever.

Then Baba Mahashaya looked at Rama Das, Pulin, Nityasvarupa and others and said, "Now tell me what I should do?" They were all in a quandary. They looked at one another, but could not say anything. After sometime Baba Mahashaya said to Navadwip Das, "Now what can I say, except that if you do not have anything to do with my present self, you will not see it again. You can go and live where you like and do what you please."

Navadwip Das said, "Your command shall be obeyed," and he went down from the first floor to the ground floor after respectfully making obeisance to him. Many others also went down and sat round him. There was no change on the face of Navadwip Das. He was talking with everyone in his usual delightful manner. A little later, when Babaji Mahashaya was coming down, he heard the sound of his footsteps. Immediately he stood up and said, "Baba Mahashaya has said that in this life I will not see him again. If he sees me now his words would be falsified. Therefore, I leave." And he left.

Navadwip Das, who was like the second self of Babaji Mahashaya, who sacrificed the happiness of all the three worlds to please him, who loved him more than he loved Gaura-Nitai and Radha-Krishna and who could not live even for a moment

without him, was not disturbed in the least to hear the hardest command of Baba Mahashaya that sounded to him like a clap of thunder, and left the place at once so that his words might not prove false.

Navadwip Das went to Vrindavan. After a couple of months he fell ill. In his illness he always chanted, "Dada! Dada!" Sometimes he said to the people, who attended upon him, "Dada is coming to see me in this hot season. Prepare *sharbat*¹ for him." This was not mere imagination. Baba Mahashaya came and he gave him *sharbat* to drink. Sometimes he also made the attendants actually see Baba Mahashaya. On the *Amavasya* day, two days before Ratha-Yatra, he said to his attendants, "Take me to Bhramar Ghat. I will see Yamuna." They took him to Bhramar Ghat. He made obeisance to Yamuna and prayed to her. Then he started chanting the Name and chanting left the body.

A very old Brahmin lady with matted hair, who was generally regarded as a *yogini*² of a very high order and often used to come to Babaji Mahashaya, during his stay in Darjeparha, once said to him, "Baba! Have you forsaken Navadwip? He is no ordinary person. He is a great soul and his devotion to guru is unique and unheard of." Baba Mahashaya replied, "No, no! Can I ever forsake Navadwip? He is my heart and soul. His heart breaks to see the miserable condition of the fallen souls. No one is so much concerned about their deliverance as he. But he did something, which I did not like. Therefore, I have only externally forsaken him. My heart always weeps for him."

The *yogini* once said to Amrita Baba, one of the disciples of Baba Mahashaya, "Navadwip is great. He is an ideal disciple.

¹ A cold drink.

² A female yogi.

If anyone wants to know what *Guru-tattva* and *Guru-bhakti* is, he should learn it from him. And this Charan Das, do you know who he is? He is *Jal-Chaitanya* (imitation-Chaitanya). I have seen all the signs of *mahabhava* appear on his body in *sankirtan*. Once I went to Jhanjapita Math in Puri. All of a sudden he came with a little *mahaprasada* and wanted to push it into my mouth. I wanted to test him. So I said, 'I will not take this *prasada*. I will take it if it is the same *prasada* of which only a small particle had made Shiva and Durga dance in spiritual madness.' He said, 'Ma! it is the same *mahaprasada*. You have only to taste it and you will know.' And he put the *mahaprasada* into my mouth. The moment I took it I was so maddened with love that I cannot describe it. Even today my hairs stand on end, when I remember that state. I have travelled far and wide and seen and tested many *sadhus*, *rishis* and yogis living in the caves of the Himalayas and the forests, but I have never come across one like him. You are fortunate to have found a guru like him. He and Navadwip, the two great souls are the two biggest luminaries on the spiritual horizon of modern India."

It would be futile to comment upon the activities of the two souls, who lived on a plane much higher than our understanding. But at the same time our mind must, by its very nature, reflect. As far as our understanding goes the parting between Baba Mahashaya and Navadwip Das was not really a parting of souls. They were, as if, two only in body, one in soul. The parting, therefore, was of bodies, not of soul. This is apparent from their attitude towards each other after the parting. The parting, however, such as it was, was not without a purpose. The purpose was, perhaps, to establish an ideal—the ideal of a guru, who in his own self was the very epitome of the highest truth, yet who was as humble as a blade of grass, a servant of the servants of the Lord, as Baba Mahashaya used to say about himself. Perhaps Baba Mahashaya thought it

necessary to counter the tendency among some gurus to set themselves up or to allow their disciples to set them up as God. If this tendency continued, he thought, it was bound to create chaos. There would be as many gods as there were gurus. The gods might even fight among themselves, each trying to establish his claim over others for the most exalted position of the Supreme God, and the seekers of God would be lost in the maze.

The great ones, who come to uphold the ideals of true religion often sacrifice their own interest and the interest of those nearest and dearest to them for the sake of an ideal. If Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu abandoned one of His dearest followers Chota Haridas to uphold the ideal of a chaste *vairagi*, it was no surprise that Baba Mahashaya abandoned his dearest disciple Navadwip Das to establish the ideal of a guru. In both cases the punishment given was only external and for the good of mankind in general. Chota Haridas remained Mahaprabhu's dear singer and used to sing songs to Him in his spiritual body, after he left his physical body. Similarly Navadwip Das remained dear to Baba Mahashaya as ever. Although they were apart in body, they were always together in spirit.

SAVING KUNJA DAS

After staying for some more time in Darjiparha Babaji Mahashaya went to Navadwip. At Navadwip he gave the following instructions to his party:

"Do not accept invitation for dinner from anywhere. Do not eat food given by anyone without my permission. Do not go out of the Ashram at night. If you go out anywhere during the day always chant the Name while going. Regard all living beings in Navadwip Dham as *nitya-siddha* (eternally free), and bow down to them. Do not eat anything not offered to the

deity. Perform *kirtan* in the morning, noon and evening every day. Do not enter into argument with any one regarding the mode of worship. Have firm faith in the oneness of Navadwip Dham and Vraja Dham."

One day, when Babaji Mahashaya had gone out for *darshan*, an old lady came with two kilos of *rasagulla*¹ and insisted on the Ashramaites eating them after offering them to the deity immediately. The entreaties of the lady made them forget that Baba Mahashaya had asked them not to eat anything offered by anyone without his permission. Lalita Dasi offered the *rasagullas* to the deity and after keeping some aside for Baba Mahashaya, began to distribute them among the Ashramites. Kunja Das was in a humorous mood. He began to snatch the *rasagullas* from the hand of everyone and eat. After a little while, when Baba Mahashaya came, he went forward and said, "Today there was a grand feast of *rasagullas*. I snatched *rasagullas* from everyone and did not let anyone eat. I have only kept some for you." Baba Mahashaya laughed and said, "Why, you should have eaten them too."

As providence would have it, the next morning Kunja Das was attacked by cholera. The doctor was called. He said, "His condition is very serious and he is not going to survive. Medicines will not be of any effect." Still Baba Mahashaya asked him to give medicine. He asked Lalita Dasi to attend upon him and some others to do *kirtan*. But his condition worsened. Diarrhoea and vomiting continued. He started raving like a mad man and abusing the people, who were doing *kirtan*, in delirium. There was severe cramp in his thigh, which Lalita Dasi was trying to stop by massage, when suddenly watery substance streaked out of his anus and fell into the mouth of Lalita Dasi. Some of it also went into her stomach. Some one

¹ A juicy sweet prepared from milk.

went and told Baba Mahashaya about it. People sitting by his side became anxious about her. They said to Baba Mahashaya, "Look, there is no hope at all for Kunja Das, but you must be very careful about Lalita, because she has swallowed the poison of cholera." Baba Mahashaya said, "You see, it is all in His hands. If He is merciful even poison can turn into nectar." He called Lalita and asked her whether she felt any fear or abhorrence. She said, "I do not understand what you mean."

Babaji: Then don't fear. Go and wash your mouth.

Lalita: I may wash or not. But what are you going to do about Kunja Das? Will you let him die?

Babaji: What can I do? It is all in the hands of providence.

Lalita: But don't you yourself say that providence ceases as soon as one surrenders to the Name or the guru and that one is reborn as soon as he takes shelter at the feet of the guru?

Babaji: Rebirth at the time of initiation does cancel all that is fated according to the deeds of the past life, but the actions performed in the life after initiation must bear fruit. Besides, surrender at the feet of the guru must be genuine. If even after surrender, freedom in action persists, how can the surrender be genuine?

Lalita: Genuine surrender is not easy. Is there no chance of deliverance for a man, who has not so surrendered? I believe that the competence of the disciple surrendering is not so important as the kindness of the guru at whose feet he surrenders. Without the mercy of the guru the disciple cannot do anything.

Babaji: He may not be able to do what is right or good, but he can certainly do what is wrong. Don't you see what Kunja Das did yesterday? Did he act like one, who had surrendered? Nitai Chand had asked you through me not to eat anything offered by anyone without asking me. But what did Kunja Das do? Did he ask me before eating the *rasagullas*?

However, pray to Nitai Chand. He is merciful and He will show mercy on him.

Lalita: I do not know Nitai Chand. Whatever is to be done must be done by you. For a small offense committed by him some small punishment would have been sufficient. But if the punishment is death, who will say that Nitai Chand is kind and merciful. Freedom is ingrained in us and we are by nature sinful, while you are by nature forgiving and merciful. You must forgive Kunja and show mercy on him.

Babaji: There is nothing that I can do. Pray to Nitai Chand and go and smear the *charanamrita* of Thakura and the Vaishnavas on the body of Kunja.

Lalita did likewise. Babaji Mahashaya went near Kunja and said, "Kunja! How are you?" Kunja Das was not able to recognize Baba Mahashaya or say anything. Lalita Dasi held the foot of Baba Mahashaya and placed it first on Kunja's forehead and then on his chest. With the touch of his feet the condition of Kunja Das began to improve. On the third day he was allright. Baba Mahashaya said to him, "By the grace of Nitai Chand you have been saved. Be careful in future." Kunja Das said with tears in his eyes, "Since you have kindly saved me, I pray that you may also kindly bless me so that I do not commit such offense again."

NAVADWIP PARIKRAMA

One day Gauramohan Das Karta Baba of Navadwip said to Baba Mahashaya, "Every year we used to go for Navadwip *parikrama*.¹ It is unfortunate that the *parikrama* is now stopped. I am sure, you can reorganize it."

Babaji: I am your child Baba. You have only to command

¹ Circumambulation of Navadwip-dham.

and I shall strive to do my best. On which day *parikrama* used to start?"

Karta Baba: On the day after Gaura-purnima.

Babaji: Very well, then we start for *parikrama* on that day.

Karta Baba: But provisions and lots of other things have to be collected.

Babaji: Why? We are *vairagis*. Why should we make any collection. We shall take the Name of Nitai Chand and start. He will arrange as He pleases.

So, the *parikrama* started. They first camped at Madhaitala. Next morning as they were passing through Idrakpurer Charha seven or eight sturdy looking persons blocked their way.

"Who are you? What do you want?" asked Babaji.

"We are all cowherds. This is our village. You have to stay here today. We shall not let you go."

So they stayed there. They first circumambulated the village with *kirtan*. They were then taken to the house of Bansi Ghosh, the leader of the cowherds in the village. Bansi was very generous and open-hearted, but rather commanding in demeanour. He was fond of using the word '*sala*' in whatever he said. '*Sala*' literally means brother-in-law and is often used as a mild term of abuse. Bansi, however, used the term only as a matter of habit. He called some of his assistants and said, "Go and tell every *sala* in the village that the saints, who have come from Navadwip to grace us must be entertained well. We shall feed them with *payas*¹ and *payas* alone and make them eat it to their fill. So, no *sala* shall carry his milk outside the village for sale today. All the milk must be collected here at my place." The *sadhus*, who heard this uttered in dismay, "Oh, *payas* alone! How shall we eat only *payas*!" Bansi felt dispirited. He said dejectedly, "Oh, the *salas* are sickly!"

¹ A delicious food prepared from milk, rice and sugar.

Allright, we shall prepare some rice and pulses as well."

While arrangements were on for the royal feast, Baba Mahashaya started *sankirtan*. The villagers were overwhelmed with joy and emotion, for they had never heard such *kirtan* before. When *sankirtan* was over Baba Mahashaya gave *mantra* to many villagers at the request of Bansi. Then after taking *mahaprasada*, he started onwards in the afternoon. He stayed in Vilvapushkarini for one night and started again the next morning. He did not go on *parikrama* straight through the direct route, but through the interior of the villages, because his main purpose was to preach *Harinama* among the villagers. As usual he went dancing and singing at the head of the procession. An important man in the party was the venerable Jatiya Rama Das Baba. He was always in ecstasy. He also went dancing with him. At about nine o'clock they reached Brahman Pukur. Many people assembled there and insisted on their staying in the village for sometime. They stayed in a place near the market. The villagers began to make arrangements for their *mahaprasada*. Baba Mahashaya and the members of his party bathed and did their morning *puja* and started *sankirtan*. The sound of the *kirtan* attracted many people. The passers-by, the school-boys going to the school, the shopkeepers, the labourers and others going on their respective business were all drawn in. All looked at Baba Mahashaya singing and dancing in ecstasy and started singing and dancing themselves. Even the people, who had never heard the Names of Nitai-Gaura, danced and wept as they sang:

"Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."

The *sankirtan* continued for four hours. At three o'clock *mahaprasada* was ready. They took *mahaprasada* and rested.

At night, after a reading of *Chaitanya-Charitamrita* they went to sleep.

Next morning, after performing their morning service, they started again. The number of people in the party went on increasing, for many people, who heard their soul-stirring *kirtan* were so moved that they found it difficult to resist the temptation of joining their company. They crossed the Ganges and reached Mayapura. They performed *kirtan* for sometime in the temple of Sri Kedarnath Dutt Bhaktivinoda Mahashaya and then proceeded towards the *samadhi* of Chand Kazi, the Mohammedan governor of Nadiya, who had surrendered at the feet of Mahaprabhu. They paid homage to the Kazi by performing *kirtan* at the *samadhi*. Near the *samadhi* beneath an old tree there was the *kutir* of a Muslim. From his appearance it was difficult to say whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim. He came in the midst of the *kirtan* and began to dance and sing. Singing and dancing he fell at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya and wept and wailed as he said, "Ha Gurudeva! Have mercy on me. Give *Harinama* in my ear. For you are the very same person, the person of my heart to whom I surrendered a long time back. I have been waiting for your *darshan* all this time. In utter helplessness, the day-before-yesterday I prayed to Kazi Sahib and he told me towards the end of the night, 'Do not worry. A *mahatma* will come here soon. You open your heart to him. He will show mercy on you.'" According to his foretelling you have come. Now have mercy on me. Do not neglect me because I am so fallen and sinful."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Kazi Sahib told you about the coming of a *mahatma*. But I am not a *mahatma*. I am a *duratma* (a sinful creature). You are a *sadhu* and a favourite of Kazi Sahib. You should show mercy on me." But the person would not listen. He held the feet of Baba Mahashaya and began to weep and wail. Baba Mahashaya was moved. He uttered the 'Hare

'Rama' *mantra* into his ear. As soon as he heard the *mantra* he fell senseless on the ground. The *kirtan*-party formed a ring round him and continued *kirtan*. When he regained consciousness, Baba Mahashaya asked him to remain at the *samadhi* and do *bhajan*.

Then the party proceeded towards Surabhi-kunj or Svarupaganj. They reached Svarupaganj at about ten a.m. They had nothing with them to fall back upon for their *mahaprasada*. As providence would have it, a shopkeeper said to Jatiya Rama Das Baba, "I always gave provisions to the *sadhus*, when they came here for *parikrama*. So I will give provisions to you and will not let you take anything from anyone else." He meant that he used to supply provisions to the *sadhus* and they paid for it. But simple-hearted Jatiya Baba thought that the shopkeeper was a devotee. He had been rendering this service to the *sadhus* without charging anything and would do the same with them.

Jatiya Baba took from the shopkeeper everything that was needed. The shopkeeper gave everything liberally. If Baba wanted one kilo of a commodity he said, "No, one kilo will not do. I am giving two kilos!" Baba thought the shopkeeper was very charitable and he was happy. Later Baba Mahashaya said to Jatiya Baba, "Dada, heaps of provisions have arrived. Is someone going to pay for them or you have yourself to foot the bill?" He replied, "There is no question of payment. The shopkeeper is a great devotee. He gave me everything liberally. I asked for one kilo he gave two kilos."

In due course the food was ready. It was offered to the deity and Babaji Mahashaya started *bhoga-arati-kirtan*. Many people came to hear the *kirtan*. The *kirtan* was so sweet that neither the performers nor the listeners wanted that it should stop. So it continued till late in the evening, when they could not think of proceeding onwards after taking *prasada*. So, they took

prasada and after resting for a while, again started *kirtan*, which continued till eleven o'clock.

Next morning, when they were preparing to leave, the shopkeeper came with a bill containing a long list of items and placed it before Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya said, "What is this?" "Yesterday's account," said the shopkeeper.

Rama Das Jatiya Baba was red with rage. He said to the shopkeeper, "Did you not say that you always supplied provisions to the *sadhus*, who came for *parikrama*?"

Shopkeeper: I do not deny that I said so. But did I say that I supplied the provisions free of cost?

Jatiya Baba: But this is what I understood. This is the impression you gave me.

Shopkeeper: Baba, I am a poor man. How can I afford to supply the provisions free?

Jatiya Baba looked at Baba Mahashaya and others and said, "Now you fellows mortgage me to the shopkeeper and go."

Baba Mahashaya laughed and said, "If you are mortgaged to him his money will still remain unpaid. On the contrary the poor man will have to pay for your food."

Others said to the shopkeeper, "You should have made it clear that you would give the provisions on payment. We would have then collected the provisions by begging. But what can we do now?"

Baba Mahashaya said to the shopkeeper, "What is the total amount of your bill?"

Shopkeeper: Forty-five rupees and thirteen and a half annas.

Babaji: If you come to the Ashram of my Gurudeva in Navadwip after four or five days, I can beg and pay the amount to you. But I am a stranger and a *vairagi*, I do not know how far you can trust me.

Shopkeeper: I trust you without doubt. But kindly write this on a piece of paper and sign.

Baba Mahashaya laughed and said, "Well, well. I shall do the same."

Lalita Dasi said, "Why not let us try and collect the money from our own party if possible?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "You can try."

Lalita Dasi could collect thirteen rupees and fifteen *annas* only. Baba Mahashaya said to the shopkeeper, "Take this money. For the rest I shall sign a note and you collect the money from my guru's Ashram after five days." The shopkeeper agreed. He brought a piece of paper from his shop and gave it to Baba Mahashaya to write the note. Baba Mahashaya asked, "What amount remains to be paid?"

Shopkeeper: I forgo thirteen and a half *annas*. Out of rupees forty-five you deduct thirteen rupees and fifteen *annas* and write out a note for thirty-one rupees.

Babaji: No, why? I write a note for rupees thirty-two.

After thus fully satisfying the shopkeeper Baba Mahashaya and his party proceeded onwards. Singing and dancing all the way they reached a garden near Dholaparha, where they decided to stay. After taking their bath and doing the morning service they started *kirtan*. The sweet melody of the *kirtan* began to attract large crowds from the village. Very soon the sequestered retreat was filled with a large number of people, because though these people lived near Navadwip and they had heard *kirtan* many times before, never had *kirtan* touched their heart so much as now. They said to one another, "In Navadwip we have heard *kirtan* performed by the great masters of music in big *tal*¹ and *sur*² with a number of persons playing on *khol* and *karatal*. But here there is only one *khol*

¹ Beating time.

² Tone.

and one *karatal* and the *sur* is most ordinary, yet we feel transported into such ecstasy as we never experienced before. And look at this *mahapurusha*, who is leading the *kirtan*. How tears of love are incessantly flowing from his eyes and all the other *sattvika-bhavas* are appearing on his body from time to time. His very sight arouses *bhakti* in our hearts and we feel like surrendering ourselves completely at his feet and renouncing the world for the sake of his company."

Kirtan continued for a long time. In the meantime the villagers had made elaborate arrangements for their dinner. They offered the food to the deity and took *mahaprasada*. Apart from the people in their party about two hundred other people also took *prasada* with them.

They stayed in the garden for the night. The next day they crossed the Ganges and reached Samudragarh, where they stayed under a tree and performed *kirtan*. It was *Ekadasi* that day, so they did not eat anything. The next day the villagers would not let them go without taking *prasada*. So, after doing *kirtan* for three hours in the morning they took *mahaprasada* and after taking some rest started for Navadwip, dancing and singing. They reached Navadwip in the evening.

CHAPTER 26

RETURN TO PURI

Babaji Mahashaya had stayed in Navadwip only for a few days, when he received a telegram from Ananda Mitra requesting him to go to Cuttack, because he was seriously ill. He started for Cuttack, taking with him only Rama Das and Nityasvarupa and leaving all others in Navadwip. As soon as he reached the house of Ananda Mitra he was overwhelmed with joy. Even though he was seriously ill and could not easily move, he got up from the bed and fell prostrate at the feet of Baba Mahashaya.

Baba Mahashaya made him lie down on the bed and asked him how he felt ill. He said, "You know Baba, what can I say?"

Baba Mahashaya: What do you think could possibly be the cause of illness?

Ananda: It comes to my mind that I have committed many sins and am still committing sins and you are trying to reform and purify me through suffering.

Babaji: You are right Ananda. Nitai Chand is merciful. He has already done much to purify you. What little remains to be done He will do. You have no reason to worry.

Ananda: Baba, I have taken too much medicine. Now I do not want to take anything except *charanamrita* and *adharamrita*. Kindly bless me.

Babaji: So you can do without fear. Bhagavan certainly

helps those, who have faith. He is not far from the *jiva*. He is to his right and to his left. Neither can the *jiva* and *jagat* (phenomenal world) exist without Him, nor can He live without them. Therefore in pleasure and pain, in times of need and suffering always remember Him and pray to Him. He will always do good and ward off evil, because He is Himself good and merciful. If you do so, it is immaterial whether you take medicine or not.

Ananda: It is my firm faith that the moment I had your *darshan*, my illness was gone.

Babaji said, "Baba, Nitai Chand is merciful. It is no surprise if he has done so." So saying he embraced Ananda Babu. Ananda Babu felt that his warm embrace freed him not only from pain and suffering, but from the bondage of *Maya* for all times. He called his wife and said, "Today I shall take the *adharamrita* of Baba Mahashaya and no medicine. You must throw away all the medicines."

Baba Mahashaya took his bath, attended to his morning prayers, had *mahaprasada* and rested. Towards the afternoon some men came from the house of Balmukunda Babu, the deputy magistrate and took him to his house. Balmukunda Babu had gone mad and turned violent. So, his people had put him in chains. On seeing Baba he began to wail, "Baba! I have gone mad. Heal me. I am a great sinner. I have tortured and tormented many people. I have not seen you for a long time. If you embrace me but once, I am sure I shall be cured." Baba Mahashaya asked his people to remove his chains. They hesitated, because they were afraid that Balmukunda Babu would start beating them. But Balmukunda Babu shouted, "Remove my chains but once so that I may embrace Babaji Mahashaya and be tranquillized." Hearing him wail like this Baba Mahashaya again said, "Baba, remove his chains. He will not do any harm." They obeyed. As soon as he was released he clasped Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya also clasped him

close to his heart. With this his madness was gone. His peace of mind was restored and he sat in a perfectly sound state of mind by the side of Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya asked him, "Can you say why you became mad?"

Balmukunda: When engaged in the work of settlement I was once conducting measurement in the Ashram in Nimparha. At that time I had some altercation with the *sadhus* residing there. I think that was the cause of my malady.

Babaji: You are right. This thought came to my mind as soon as I saw you and therefore I made this inquiry. You should be careful in future. An offense committed against a Vaishnava is so detrimental that it destroys in an instant the good effect of *bhajan* practised throughout life. Not only the Vaishnavas, the offense committed against any *jiva* is detrimental. My advice is that you should at once go and apologize to those Vaishnavas. That will be good for your *bhajan*.

After thus consoling and counselling Balmukunda Babu, Baba Mahashaya left for Puri by train.

As soon as the train reached Puri station and Baba Mahashaya got down, the station master and the other employees at the station made obeisance to him. Baba Mahashaya blessed them all with his usual smile and proceeded straight to the Temple of Jagannath. After seeing Jagannath he went to Jhanjapita Math. As the people of Puri came to know about his arrival a thrill of joy ran through their veins. They began to come to him to soothe their hearts by his *darshan* after a long period of separation.

After a few days Baba Mahashaya wrote a letter asking his companions at Navadwip to return to Puri. They were overjoyed to receive the letter, which broke the painful spell of separation they were passing through in his absence. They lost no time in going to Puri. As soon as they reached Jhanjapita Math, they clung to Baba Mahashaya like children, who had

lost their mother and found her again. Baba Mahashaya embraced each one of them with eyes filled with tears on account of a sense of guilt for coming away to Puri without them and consoled them by his sweet words.

RATHA-YATRA

Slowly the time for the annual ceremonies of Jagannath Deva arrived. The Chandan-Yatra, the Snana-Yatra and the Gundicha-Marjana ceremonies were performed with the usual eclat and enthusiasm and the soul-stirring *kirtans* of Baba Mahashaya and his companions. On the Ratha-Yatra day in the morning Baba Mahashaya reached the Temple of Jagannath along with his companions. Jagannath, Baladeva, Subhadra and Sudarshana were seated on the *ratha* (chariot). The *ratha* moved but little. The next day Baba arrived with his companions much earlier and began to sing songs of praise to Jagannath. The *ratha* began to move at 11:30 a.m. Mr. Bleko, the magistrate of Puri, was supervising the movement of the *ratha*. That day the *ratha* moved up to Jagannath Vallabha. The magistrate wanted that the next day the *ratha* should reach the Gundicha Temple. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "Kindly come early in the morning tomorrow, because the *ratha* will not move without your dance and *kirtan*." Baba Mahashaya said, "Baba, It is not my dance and *kirtan*. It is the dance and *kirtan* of Nitai-Gauranga." The magistrate thought that Baba Mahashaya said this out of sheer humility. But for Baba Mahashaya it was not sheer humility. He meant what he said. In his *kirtans* he always imagined that he was dancing and singing in the company of Nitai-Gauranga. He not only imagined, he saw Them dancing and singing before him. The magistrate, however, said, "But I always see that the movement of the *ratha*

is fast or slow according to the movement of your *sankirtan* in front of the *ratha*."

The next day the *ratha* of Balabhadra and Subhadra reached Gundicha Temple within a short time. But the gigantic *ratha* of Jagannath stopped near the bridge. All attempts to drag it further failed. At that time Baba Mahashaya had stopped *sankirtan* and was sitting on one side of the road. The magistrate came and said to him, "Baba, you must come. I believe that the moment you join the pulling of the *ratha*, it will begin to move." Baba Mahashaya's eyes were filled with tears and voice was choked with emotion as he said, "Baba, I am a small fry. What strength do I have? But I believe that the moment Mahaprabhu touches the *ratha* it will begin to move. Let us go and see what *lila* Mahaprabhu performs and be blest." He got up and like one possessed with the spirit of Mahaprabhu went swaying and swinging behind the *ratha* and began to dance. The magistrate went in front of the *ratha* and asked the people to pull. As the people began to pull, Baba Mahashaya began to push the *ratha* with his forehead from behind. Immediately the *ratha* began to move. Baba Mahashaya then went in front of the *ratha* and began to sing and dance as before. Within a short time the *ratha* reached the Gundicha Temple.

The next day Baba Mahashaya was laid up with fever. There was severe pain in the chest on account of congestion. Maguni Mahashaya, the physician to His Highness the Raja of Puri, was called. He prescribed medicine and advised complete rest and protection from exposure of any kind. Baba Mahashaya was made to lie in his room. The doors and windows of the room were closed. At 11:30 a.m. Sri Shitikantha Goswami, Sri Tarapasanna Goswami and three other devotees came from Navadwip. When they came to know that Baba Mahashaya was ill, they wanted to go back without seeing him. Immediately Baba Mahashaya came out and

began to talk with them. He asked them to bathe and take *mahaprasada* in the Math and go out for *darshan* of Jagannath in the evening.

Tara Babu: I will take *prasada* only after I have seen Jagannath.

Babaji: In Puri *mahaprasada* is equally glorified. Therefore you can take *mahaprasada* before Jagannath's *darshan*.

Tara Babu: What you say is correct, but what can I do? My mind does not accept it. Kindly ask someone to guide us to the temple.

Babaji: Whom to ask? I shall myself accompany you.

Tara Babu: No, you must not. You are unwell.

Baba Mahashaya threw away his warm clothes and came out of the Ashram, while his companions kept looking at him with dismay and anxiety.

Shitikantha Goswami said to Baba Mahashaya, "Why not let us take with us one or two pairs of *karatals*?

Baba Mahashaya said, "Yes, *karatals* we must carry, because we, the *jivas* of Kali, are so weak and infirm that we cannot walk without falling or faltering. We must always ride the train of *Harinama*.

So, they came out of the Math with *khol* and *karatals* and set out for the Gundicha Mandir singing:

"*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*"

What a jocund company! They were soon in ecstasy. Baba Mahashaya and Shitikantha Goswami sang and danced in ecstasy. *Sattvika-bhavas* appeared simultaneously on their bodies. While they danced the others sang and clapped their hands. Slowly they reached Gundicha Temple. The doors of Jagannath were about to be closed. But when the

pujari saw Baba Mahashaya coming, he kept them open. They looked at Jagannath to their heart's content.

Since Tara Babu was tired, they took *mahaprasada* at the temple. After taking *mahaprasada* they went back to the Math dancing and singing.

GLORIFYING MAHAPRASADA

The next day they were invited to a feast at the Jena Math. They went, performed *sankirtan* and after *sankirtan* sat down to eat with a large number of other invitees. Baba Mahashaya mixed all the different kinds of *prasada* that were served and picking a morsel of the same put parts of it into the mouths of Tara Babu, Shitikantha Goswami, and the others, who had come with them from Navadwip and himself ate the rest. As soon as Tara Babu swallowed that *prasada* there was a sudden change in him. He forgot all about his high caste as Varendra Brahmin and status as a rich and venerable person of Navadwip and snatching an empty pot from the hand of one of the persons serving *mahaprasada*, began to collect and put in it a small quantity of *prasada* from the *pattal* of each of the persons eating, including some low caste persons and lepers, eating outside the Math. He then put a small quantity of the same into the mouth of each of the persons eating. At the end as he put a particle of it into the mouth of Babaji Mahashaya, he sang the following *sloka* in praise of *mahaprasada* in an ecstatic mood and with tears flowing from his eyes:

“*mahaprasade govinde namabrahmani vaishnave,
svalpapunyavatam rajan vishvasanaiva jayate.*”

—It is only those, whose *punya* (fortune due to the good deeds performed in the past) is but small, who cannot have faith in the oneness of *mahaprasada*, the Holy Name, the Vaishnavas and Sri Govinda.”

Babaji Mahashaya exclaimed, "Oh! How fortunate are they, who have faith in *mahaprasada*. It is the merciful Lord Himself, Who assumes the shape of the *mahaprasada* to shower His mercy upon the *jivas* without any consideration of caste or creed, virtue or vice." So saying he picked some *mahaprasada* from the pot in Tara Babu's hand, put some of it into the mouth of Tara Babu and himself ate the rest. Similarly, Tara Babu picked a morsel of the *prasada*, put a part of it in the mouth of Babaji Mahashaya and himself ate the rest. As they did so the Vaishnavas with one voice shouted "*Haribol!*"

Obviously Babaji Mahashaya had mysteriously impelled Tara Babu to act thus in order to glorify *mahaprasada* and to impress upon everyone that it was not desecrated even if touched or eaten by people of low caste or by those who were sinful.

ARRIVAL OF PHANIBHUSHAN DAS

One day Babaji Mahashaya was resting in the hind portion of the first floor of the Jhanjapita Math, when a fifteen or sixteen year old boy came to the Math. He said he wanted to meet Babaji Mahashaya. He was told that Baba Mahashaya was sleeping and that he could be seen only after he waked. But the boy was restless. He said, "I would not rest in peace until I see him. I only want to see him once. I shall not disturb him, if he is asleep." Still he was not allowed to go and see him. Meanwhile Baba Mahashaya, who was ever so kind to anyone who came to him, started in his sleep and said, "A boy has come, who wants to meet me. Why are they not allowing him? Go and bring him." The devotee attending upon Baba Mahashaya went and brought the boy. The boy lay prostrate before Baba Mahashaya. Baba asked him, "What is your name?"

Boy: My name is Phanibhushan Das.

Babaji: Where do you live?

Phani: In a village near Tarkeshvara.

Babaji: I hope you have not come away without informing your parents.

Phani: Baba, I was in Calcutta when you had gone there. The moment I saw you I decided to live with you in your Ashram. Kindly accept me for ever. I shall not go back.

As he said this, he fell at the feet of Baba Mahashaya and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him and said, "You are most welcome. But what about your parents; have you taken their permission?"

Phani: My parents are dead.

Babaji: Then Nitai Chand has already cleared the way for your renunciation.

Baba Mahashaya then asked Lalita Dasi to give him *mahaprasada*. Since then Phani began to live with Baba Mahashaya, although he was a disciple of Kunjalal Goswami of Satgachiya.

OFFENSE AND SELF-EXPLORATION

One day when everyone in the Ashram had taken *mahaprasada* and Lalita Dasi had collected the utensils used in the service of the deity and kept them outside the kitchen, she began to wash her feet near the utensils. Baba Mahashaya saw her doing this. She felt ashamed and went and washed her feet elsewhere. In the evening she suddenly developed severe pain in her right leg. At night, when Baba Mahashaya returned from Jagannath's Temple someone in the Ashram told him about this. He smiled and said, "Does she know why she got the pain?" He replied, "No, no one knows how she got it."

Baba Mahashaya did not say anything further, but he kept asking Lalita Dasi to do what she could not without walking.

She continued to do everything, though with great difficulty. Two days passed like this. The pain did not subside. The third day at midnight, when she was alone in her room and was not able to sleep on account of the pain, she said to herself, "I do not know what has caused this pain. I must have committed some offense." She began to think what offense she had committed. Suddenly the thought came to her mind that she had washed her feet over the utensils used in the service of the Lord, and Baba Mahashaya had seen her doing so. That must be the cause of her pain, she thought. Surprisingly, as soon as the thought came the pain began to ameliorate. The next morning Baba Mahashaya called her. She went smiling. Baba asked, "I see you smiling. Perhaps the pain is gone. What medicine did you take?"

Lalita: No medicine. The relief came automatically with the discovery of the cause.

Babaji: Could you discover the real cause?

Lalita: I think the cause was the washing of my feet over the utensils.

Babaji: Undoubtedly that was the cause. Mahaprabhu has asked you to regard even a blade of grass as superior to you. You should know that a thing used in the service of Krishna is far more superior. It is *chinmaya* (transcendental).

Lalita: I know that. But I did not commit the offense intentionally. As soon as I realized what I was doing I stepped aside. But if I could not immediately realize what was the cause of the pain, you knew it, because you saw me washing my feet over the utensils. Could you not point it out and save me from the agony I suffered for three days?

Babaji: If I had told you about this perhaps you would not have believed. Now whenever this kind of thing happens, you will be reminded of this episode and will begin self-exploration. There is no remedy for the suffering caused by an offense

of this kind except self-exploration and self-reproachment.

After sometime Lalita Dasi fell ill. Another disciple of Babaji Mahashaya took upon himself the task of cooking. He had been earlier debarred from all kinds of service, because he had displeased Gaurahari Das Babaji Mahashaya, the Gurudeva of Babaji Mahashaya by his behaviour. But because he entered the kitchen and started cooking of his own no one thought it fit to prevent him from cooking for fear of displeasing him. When most of the cooking was done, a big cat entered the kitchen. Baba Mahashaya saw the cat coming out of the kitchen. He called Lalita Dasi and asked her to go and see if it had eaten anything. Lalita Dasi went and saw that it had eaten part of everything cooked. She came back and said, "The cat has eaten part of everything cooked. Forty kilos of rice has been cooked and corresponding amount of pulses and vegetables. What shall we now do with them?"

Babaji: What else can you do? Since they cannot be offered to the Lord, you must bury them. Do you know why this has happened? The Lord does not accept the service of a man, who has displeased a *mahatma* or a Vaishnava.

This cautioned everyone in the Ashram against Vaishnava-*aparadha* (offense committed against a Vaishnava).

One day about 2 o'clock, when Lalita Dasi, Kusummanjari Dasi and some other *sakhis* were taking *mahaprasada* beside the kitchen, a cat came and sat near them. Lalita Dasi, who was already full of malice against the cat, on account of the afore mentioned episode, gave it a slap in the face with her left hand. The cat ran away crying. Baba Mahashaya heard it cry, but he did not say anything. In the evening Lalita Dasi began to feel excruciating pain in her left hand. Two days passed in the agony, but the pain did not subside. When some people in the Ashram told Baba

Mahashaya about it and requested him to arrange for some medicine, he said, "What can medicine do? If medicine cured all diseases no one would suffer. She must do self-exploration and find out the cause." When Lalita Dasi was told about this she understood that Baba Mahashaya had again hinted at some *aparadha* (offense). She began to explore what *aparadha* she had committed. At night it came to her mind that the cause possibly was the slap she had inflicted on the cat. The moment she thought of it the pain was considerably reduced.

The next morning when Baba Mahashaya saw that she was at work as usual, he said, "You seem to have been relieved of the pain. How did you get rid of it?"

Lalita: That day a cat came and sat before me while I was eating and I gave it a slap. The moment I thought that that might be the cause of the pain, I began to feel relief.

Babaji: Yes, that was the cause.

Lalita: But since the cat is regarded as inauspicious and prejudicial to the service of Krishna, I do not understand why it should be an offense to beat and expel it from the place of service. It was the same cat that spoiled the Thakura's *bhoga* that day. Should I, therefore, have caressed it instead of beating?

Babaji: Cat may be prejudicial to the service of Krishna. But should it for that reason be debarred from the *adharamrita* of Krishna? The hungry creature came to you in the hope of getting a handful of *mahaprasada*. But you gave it a slap and made it cry and run. How cruel! If in this Ashram also you drive it away like this, who will treat it better? Every creature is a servant of Krishna. If you ill treat it will not Krishna be displeased? Do not the *shastras* enjoin that you should regard even the smallest of the creatures as worshipable? If you do not do this you have no right to call yourself a Vaishnava.

JAGANNATH'S DATUN¹

For sometime the management of the Temple of Jagannath has been completely out of gear. The service of Jagannath is not done according to schedule. Ratha-Yatra has arrived. Today is the sixth day of Ratha-Yatra, but the *ratha* has not yet reached the Gundicha Temple. Since Jagannath is on the way it has not been possible to offer the usual *bhoga* to Him. Babaji Mahashaya is very much distressed to see Jagannath going without food day after day.

A little while ago when he came for the *darshan* of Jagannath this morning, the *panda* serving Jagannath gave him the *datun* used by Jagannath. On receiving the valuable *prasada* of Jagannath the *sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body and there was no end to his happiness. He returned to Jhanjapita Math with the *datun* placed over his head. He asked Lalita Dasi to clean the room adjoining the temple in the Math and said "We shall instal this image of Jagannath Deva in that room. Jagannath has told me that He has not had *anna* (regular food comprising rice and pulses etc.) for several days and that he would have it here. You must prepare the *bhoga* in earthen pots in the same manner in which it is prepared in Jagannath Temple." The *datun* was duly installed in the room as the very image of Jagannath and proper arrangements for His service were made.² The next day Subhadra Devi's *datun* was given to Babaji Mahashaya and the day after Balarama's *datun*. They were also installed by him along side of Jagannath.

The *ratha* reached Gundicha Mandir on the ninth day. On the tenth day it started returning to the Jagannath Temple. But it could not be pulled beyond the bridge, where it stood for a

¹ Twig used for cleansing teeth.

² A thing used by the deity is regarded as non-different from the deity.

number of days. During this period Jagannath had to go without regular food. He was given only *chirha*¹ to eat. The beggars, who depended entirely upon the *mahaprasada* of Jagannath, which was distributed free to them, had also to go without food. Babaji Mahashaya had arranged for the proper *bhoga* of Jagannath at the Jhanjapita Math, but the beggars remained unfed. His kind heart could not bear this. He, therefore, arranged for the distribution of *mahaprasada* to two to three hundred beggars as well at the Jhanjapita Math.

Someone said to Babaji Mahashaya, "I see that about three hundred people are fed at the Math both morning and evening everyday. How is it all financed?"

Baba Mahashaya replied, "The financier is Nitai Chand. I do not know how He manages. Everyday we find that we have just enough to feed everyone who comes. There is neither any shortage nor anything to lay by for the next day."

A number of days passed like this. One evening Lalita Dasi said to Baba Mahashaya, "We have no funds today. If we do not make necessary purchases today, I do not know how we are going to feed people tomorrow."

Babaji: Why tell me about this? It is not my show. Why not go and tell Them, Who are running the show?

Lalita: I tell you, because I see you. I do not see anyone else. You are directly perceived, others are inferred. Why should I leave perception and run after inference?

Babaji: I also say that you should abide by perception not by inference. But you are mistaken when you think you know me by perception. What you perceive is not me but my body. When I die my body will remain, but you will not see me. You will infer from the dead body that I am gone, while the body remains. It will then be clear that you know me by inference not

¹ Rice, wetted, flattened and parched.

by perception. You are also mistaken when you think you know the One, Who is the very condition and support of all knowledge and existence, by inference. We do not need any inference to know Him. We know Him directly and intuitively.

Lalita: Then you tell me what I should say and to whom.

Babaji: I have told you so many times that Sri Murti¹ is real and eternal. Go to the temple and say to Nitai, "In Your Ashram so many people are being fed everyday. We have no money to purchase provisions for tomorrow. Now You do what You like."

Lalita Dasi did likewise. After about twenty minutes Babaji Mahashaya called her. She went and saw that some rupee coins were piled up before him and an ordinary looking person was sitting by his side. Babaji Mahashaya asked him what for he was giving that money. He replied, "I came to know that you were short of funds. So I am giving this small amount. I wish I could give more. But I am a poor man and I cannot afford more."

Baba Mahashaya said to Lalita Dasi, "See how kind is Nitai. He listens to your request."

Lalita Dasi was surprised. She began to curse herself for her lack of faith. With tears in her eyes she said, "I did not make the request with faith. I was rather angry with you to see your indifference and was worried to think what would happen tomorrow. I only repeated before Nitai Chand what you had said in sheer obedience to you."

Babaji: Now you see, if this can be the result of a request made to Nitai Chand without faith, what cannot be achieved by faith. Man suffers only for want of faith. Nitai Chand is very kind. He administers to all our needs even without our prayer, if only we have faith in Him and depend entirely upon him.

¹ The image of the Lord.

Now we are feeding so many people both morning and evening everyday. Who feeds them? Nitai, not you. You cannot even feed yourself, if Nitai Chand is not kindly disposed towards you. Today you are grown up. You have developed some capacity to do what you want, to feed and protect yourself. But who fed and protected you when you were in the mother's womb? And when you were born, who filled your mother's breast with milk and taught you to suck?

GUNASINDHU

One day Baba Mahashaya was sitting near the temple in the Ashram surrounded by some disciples. A man about forty-five years old came, made obeisance and stood aside with folded hands and tears streaming profusely out of his eyes. Baba Mahashaya asked him to sit down. He said, "Baba, I am a great sinner and a hypocrite. Kindly give shelter under your feet." As he said this, he fell at Baba's feet and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya consoled him with sweet words and made inquiries about his name and residence etc. He said, "My name is Gunasindhu. I am a resident of district Batharganj. I came here a few days back. I have been attending your *kirtans* and have felt attracted to your feet. Kindly accept me as your unworthy child and keep me in your service for ever. I shall serve you with all my heart and soul."

Babaji: Where are you staying at present?"

Gunasindhu: I have rented a house in Banamber Lane in Kundaibentsahi. I shall be happy if you kindly grace my residence with all your companions and have *mahaprasada* there.

Baba Mahashaya agreed. The next day he went to his place with his companions and had *mahaprasada*. Gunasindhu had arranged for a rich variety of dishes and his eyes were wet as he

served them. Everyone was pleased by his sweet and loving behaviour.

One day he said to Baba Mahashaya, "I have a thousand rupee note, which I want to cash, because I have to make some purchases. Can the note be cashed here?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "Yes, why not." He called Balarama Babu and asked him to get the note cashed.

Balarama Babu said, "I shall have to go to the treasury to cash the note."

Gunasindhu said, "Can I make some purchases just now and pay when the note is cashed?"

"Surely, you can," said Balarama Das. He took him to Haripatra, a shopkeeper near Sinhadvara and said, "Look Hari, this is Gunasindhu Babu. He has to make some purchases. You give him everything he needs. If you do not have anything in your shop get it from others. Do not bother about payment. That is my responsibility."

Gunasindhu Said, "No Dada, I shall pay as soon as the note is cashed."

Gunasindhu purchased utensils, clothes and a number of other things from the shop, as and when he required. He also borrowed money from Balarama Babu and the other disciples of Baba Mahashaya and entertained them from time to time. One day Balarama Babu said to him, "I am going to the treasury. Please give me the thousand rupee note to be cashed." He replied, "Do not bother about that. A *panda* needs a thousand rupee note. I have promised to give it to him as soon as he has collected a thousand rupees."

One day he came to Baba Mahashaya with a purse and said, "Baba, this purse contains two notes of a thousand rupees each. I would like to keep it with you in your Ashram, if you do not mind, so that it may be secure." Baba Mahashaya said, "You can certainly keep it here." He called Lalita Dasi

and asked Gunasindhu to hand over the purse to her.

Gunasinghu's purchases from the shop of Haripatra and borrowings from the disciples and followers of Babaji Mahashaya continued, as also his entertainment of the Ashramites. Gradually the borrowings mounted to nine hundred and fifty rupees, but the thousand rupee note remained uncashed. This aroused some suspicion in the mind of Balarama Das. Next time when Gunasinghu came to borrow forty rupees from him, he said he had no money at that time. He went to Lalita Dasi and said, "Didi, there is no end to Gunasinghu's borrowing. How long can I go on lending money to him? You kindly speak to Baba Mahashaya and give me his thousand rupee note. I shall cash it today." Lalita Dasi spoke to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya said, "Well, bring his purse and give one note to Balarama." Lalita Dasi brought the purse. She examined it and said, "It is stitched from all sides. How can I open it?" Baba Mahashaya asked her to remove the stitches. She removed the stitches with a knife. On opening the purse she was surprised to see that it contained two papers, on one of which was written guru-*vandana* (prayers to the guru) and on the other were inscribed the rules of worship. Balarama, who was sitting by her side was aghast to see this. Baba Mahashaya, who was having a shave at that times said, without turning to look in that direction, "There are two notes in the purse. Give one to Balarama."

Lalita Dasi said, "Before I give the note to Balarama I read out to you its number. The number is '*ajnana timirandhasya jnananjana shalakaya, chaksurunmilitam yena tasmai sri gurave namah.*' Should I read the number of the other note as well?"

Baba Mahashaya was taken aback. He interrupted the shave and went to the spot to see the contents of the purse for himself. He stood silent for sometime, then said, "Stitch

the purse as it was before and send someone to call Gunasindhu." Lalita Dasi put the two papers inside the purse and stitched it. Then she went and put it inside her box as before. When Gunasindhu came Baba Mahashaya made him sit by his side and said, "Look Gunasindhu, the shopkeeper's bill has mounted high. He is asking for payment. Give your note to Balarama. He would get it cashed immediately." Then he asked Lalita Dasi to bring the purse and give it to Gunasindhu. Lalita Dasi brought and placed the purse before him. He examined it carefully and said, "I apprehend that someone has opened it. Anyway, I am going to the *panda*. He has promised to give the money today in exchange for the note." Balarama said, "Why not give the note to me. I shall go to the *panda* and get the money." Baba Mahashaya pretended to be angry at this and said to Balarama, "Why not let him go? The *panda* may not give the money to you." Gunasindhu quietly slipped away.

After he had gone Baba Mahashaya said to Balarama Das, "Balarama! Do not worry about the money you have lost. Go and give him a five rupee note, otherwise how will he go back home?"

Balarama said, "I shall give him five rupees, but if you permit I may also pull him by the nose."

"Pooh!" Said Baba, "Does it befit you even to think of it? You should not let him even know from your behaviour that you have come to know everything. You give him five rupees and tell him that you are giving him five, because you cannot immediately give him forty demanded by him and you would try to give him the rest later. As regards the money due to the shopkeeper, we shall arrange for payment as soon as possible, without telling him anything about Gunasindhu's behaviour. You must also take care to see that no one else comes to know about it. If the *pandas* come to know about it they will cease to trust the pilgrims."

PHANI'S DEATH AND REVIVAL

Baba Mahashaya was out in Cuttack, when severe cholera epidemic broke out in Puri. Hundreds of lives were lost every day. People performed *yajna*, *kirtan* and *Bhagavata-saptah*¹ to appease the gods, but it was all in vain. When Baba Mahashaya came to know about this, he returned to Puri. One day, as he was doing *kirtan* before Jagannath, Madhava Pashupalak, the *pujari-panda* of Jagannath threw round his neck the *prasadi* garland of Jagannath and said, "Jagannath has ordered that you should do *nagara-kirtan* in Puri." Baba Mahashaya said "How?" The *panda* replied, "After worshipping Jagannath, when I was making obeisance to Him a little while ago, I said to Him 'Prabhu! Your children in Puri depend entirely upon You. Now they are suffering so much, but you remain a silent spectator. Does not your heart weep at their suffering? We have done all that we could by way of *kirtan*, but instead of diminishing, the scourge of cholera has been increasing day by day. The only thing that remains to be done is *nagara-kirtan* by Babaji Mahashaya. Our hope lies in him. But he will do *nagara-kirtan* only if ordered by you.' The moment I said this He let His garland fall. Now it is up to you to take this as you will." As soon as Baba Mahashaya heard this, tears began to flow from his eyes and tremor, horripilation and the other *sattvika-bhavas* appeared on his body.

The next morning he said to his companions, "Look, we are today going to wage a *sankirtan*-war against cholera. You must all gird up your loins as soldiers of the *sankirtan*-army. The army will go round the city performing *sankirtan* under the command of Nitai Chand. No one must go out of the ring of the

¹ Reading of *Srimad Bhagavatam* for seven days.

army during *sankirtan*. If any one goes out Nitai Chand will not be responsible for his safety."

The *sankirtan* started from Jhanjapita Math and reached Sinhadvara. At Sinhadvara Babaji Mahashaya sang and danced with unusual vigour in a manner in which he appeared to be the very image of war rather than of love, in which he usually appeared in his *sankirtan*. The shopkeepers round about, the *pandas* and *pujaris* and the passers by, young and old, men and women all joined his *sankirtan*. The *sankirtan* army swelled more and more in numbers as it marched through the streets with Babaji Mahashaya singing:

*"Yama flee, O flee, Nitai has come,
Gaura has come, Advaita has come.
On Gaura's register is registered our name,
No more, no more on us thy claim."*

Others repeated the song and leaped and jumped like frenzied soldiers on march to conquer Yama. They were confident that Yama would at last be conquered.

Slowly the *sankirtan*-party reached Harchandi Sahi. But God knows how and why Phani, who never disobeyed Baba Mahashaya, got separated from the party and was seen trailing behind, against the order and warning of Baba Mahashaya. After sometime he had stomach-ache and hurried into the Auliya Math to ease himself. He had one motion and his face became black. Then he ran to Jhanjapita Math, had one or two motions more and lay completely broken on the bed. Lalita Dasi was very much alarmed to see his condition. When Baba Mahashaya returned from *nagara-kirtan*, she said to him, "Phani is laid up with cholera. His condition is serious."

Babaji: No surprise. I had warned that whosoever would go out of the *sankirtan*-party would come to grief.

Lalita: He is after all a child. Besides he was ill and weak, so he might have lagged behind.

Babaji: Impossible! Within the circle of Nitai Chand's *sankirtan* he could never be ill.

Lalita: In his present condition it would not be proper to say anything to him. Kindly come and have a look at him.

Lalita Dasi took him to the room in which Phani was lying. He was very much distressed to see his condition. He came out of the room and said, "It appears that he will not survive."

Then Lalita Dasi said with tears in her eyes, "So the innocent boy will die before your eyes and you will not do anything! Then who will believe in the power of the Name, which you are never tired of emphasising?"

Babaji: *Jiva* suffers on account of his actions and blames the Lord and His Name.

Lalita: No, I do not blame the Lord. I blame you people, the great ones, who possess infinite power to relieve the *jivas* of their suffering. The *jivas* suffer because you are so indifferent to them.

Babaji: Do you think that it is proper to invoke the Name for curing diseases, or for small worldly gains or for being known and respected as a *mahatma*?

Lalita: I do not talk of the Name. I talk of your will and desire to relieve the people of their suffering. Is the Lord not bound to fulfil your desire?

Not inclined to continue the conversation Baba Mahashaya went to take his bath. He had just finished his bath when Lalita Dasi came again greatly disturbed and weeping and said, "Come and see! Phani is dying. His limbs are cramped, body has become icy cold, motions, sweating and vomiting continue. He does not recognize anyone. There is no hope of his survival."

Baba Mahashaya wore a long face and said, "What can I do? Go and speak to Baba." By 'Baba' he meant his *siksha-guru* Sri Gaurahari Das Babaji, who had come to Puri and was presently staying in Jhanjapita Math. Lalita Dasi went to him,

while Baba Mahashaya went to see Phani in his room. When Lalita Dasi supplicated to Gaurahari Das Babaji, he said, "What can I do? Go and speak to Yadava (Baba Mahashaya)." He then went to see Phani. Lalita Dasi followed. She looked at both Baba Mahashaya and Gaurahari Das Babaji and said, weeping and wailing, "Look, both of you, father and son, if this boy dies, I shall break the *kanthi* of each of the other boys in the Ashram and send them home. I shall go about and preach that neither the Name nor the *mahatmas* have any power. I say, you are the well-wishers and the benefactors of mankind. Is this boy not a human being? You are so cruel to him that for a small offense, which he has inadvertently committed, you are going to punish him with death! Now I have said what I had to say, and I shall see."

Baba Mahashaya saw that Phani was about to die. He sat near him cross-legged and asked those performing *kirtan* to sing louder. His condition worsened. His eyes turned upwards and his body became still and motionless. Suddenly he breathed his last. All began to weep. Baba Mahashaya shouted "*Ha Nitai!*" His body trembled. He touched Phani's forehead with the great toe of his right leg. His eyes became red and moistened and seemed to be fixed on someone nobody could see. He seemed to say to him something in broken words, but in a manner that was bold and spirited. Immediately Phani's dead body began to move and breathe and his face became bright. Lalita Dasi, who was sitting near his feet, turned her eyes towards Baba Mahashaya. She was surprised to see that there sat instead of him a tall, white and lustrous *mahapurusha* with *hal*¹ and *musal*.² But as she said to the person sitting by her side, "Look, how handsome and lustrous..." she saw Baba Mahashaya and not the lustrous *mahapurusha*. Baba Mahashaya asked his companions

¹ Plough.

² A weapon, which Sri Balarama wears.

to continue *kirtan* and left the room.

Phani was revived. But as the day darkened the atmosphere in the Ashram was charged with fear. In every direction the Ashramites saw frightful scenes, which struck terror in their hearts and heard fearful sounds, which they could not account for. The whole atmosphere was wrapt in mystery. They passed the night without sleep.

The mystery became clear from what happened the next day. For sometime there had been living in the Ashram two Brahmins, whose names were Gadadhara and Ganesh Mahapatra. Ganesh Mahapatra had the *vigraha* of a four-armed goddess seated on a lion, whom he worshipped. In the Ashram there was a *vigraha* of *Yogamaya*, whom the Ashramites worshipped. The *vigraha* of the four-armed goddess was fierce and wrathful. She was not well disposed towards the Ashramites, worshipping *Yogamaya*, and wanted to harm them. *Yogamaya* was calm and peaceful and kindly disposed towards the Ashramites. That day, at seven o'clock in the morning, as soon as Mahapatra entered his room to worship the goddess, he shrieked. The Ashramites rushed to his room. They saw that the *vigraha* of the goddess was lying broken on the ground. Lalita Dasi went and told Baba Mahashaya about this. He said, "Yesterday night the goddess was in a terrible mood. She wanted to do some harm to the Ashram. But *Yogamaya* fought with her. She first broke her club and then struck at her waist with Her *chakra*¹ and cut it through. *Yogamaya* has thus protected us and brought about peace in the Ashram. But Phani is not yet completely out of danger. The danger will continue till evening."

At four o'clock in the afternoon Baba Mahashaya called Rama Das and said, "Rama, collect everyone in the Ashram and go for *nagara-kirtan* and return before sunset." Rama Das

¹ A weapon in the shape of a disc.

went out for *nagara-kirtan*. Towards the evening Baba Mahashaya went and stood at the gate, waiting for the return of the *kirtan* party. He asked Lalita Dasi and Kusum Dasi to stand on either side of the gate with a pitcher full of water. As the sun was about to set the *kirtan* party returned. Before the party entered the Ashram, Lalita Dasi and Kusum Dasi poured out water at the gate. The *kirtan* party then began to enter the gate. Baba Mahashaya remained standing on one side. He asked Lalita Dasi to bring one more pitcher of water, which he held in his hand. Soon after he saw a tall, fearful looking person, with long yellow hair standing on end, and copper colored eyes sinking deep into its sockets, trailing behind at a distance of about five yards from the tail end of the party. Everyone was frightened to see him. Baba Mahashaya poured the pitcher of water over his head and said, "Fly, fly!" The fellow began to shout and shriek. Then as Baba Mahashaya ran after him with a *lathi* (bamboo stick) in his hand, he took to his heels. Baba Mahashaya got the place, where he stood smeared with cow-dung. Then he said, "There is no danger now. Rest assured. That frightful figure was cholera. He is now gone and will not come again."

Next morning Baba Mahashaya said, "Today Phani has to be bathed with 108 pitchers of water." Lalita said, "But Phani is too weak. He can hardly sit up. If he catches cold, his condition would be serious." Baba said angrily, "His responsibility does not lie on you! It is on Nitai Chand! If He can make the dead Phani live, can't he make the cold water hot? Your vision is clouded by *Maya*. Therefore you cannot believe even if you see." Lalita Dasi cursed herself for her disbelief.

Baba Mahashaya had Phani bathed with well-water in his presence. Then after making him wear a silken dress and a gold ring he said, "Now go and make obeisance before Thakura." As Phani began to move slowly towards the Temple of Radhakanta, he remarked, "Oh, how my son is going like a prince! Go my son, your malady is over."

CHAPTER 27

DIVINE MADNESS OR DIVYONMAD

One day Baba Mahashaya was sitting in his Ashram surrounded by his companions and some people from outside. He said with a start, "Oh, how awful! What horrible time has come! How the stars portend evil! How will the stars be pacified? When will the normal times be restored? Ha Nitai!" He said this and began to weep like a child. A little while later, when he was somewhat composed, someone said, "Baba! What makes you so apprehensive and distressed? May we know the cause of your anxiety?"

PURI IN TURMOIL

Baba Mahashaya replied, "What shall I say? The whole dham is going to be in turmoil. All the nine stars (*nava-graha*) are terribly agitated. Lawlessness will prevail everywhere. The service of Jagannath will be jeopardized. Dissension and discord will destroy the peace of every home."

"When is this going to happen?" inquired the companions.

"It has already begun," said Baba tearfully. "You will see what happens in three or four days."

"How long will the stars remain agitated?"

"No one can say how long. But they can be propitiated

soon if worshipped ritualistically.”

After three or four days, when Baba Mahashaya went to Jagannath Temple, he saw that the service of Jagannath was stopped and the *pandas* were conferring with one another as to what should be done. Baba Mahashaya asked Madhava Pashupalak what had happened. He replied ruefully, “When the inner temple was opened this morning for *mangala-arati*, a bundle containing fish was found lying in front of the altar. No one knows how this happened inspite of the fact that all the doors were locked and sealed at night as usual. Now we do not know what to do. We went to the Maharaja and told him that when this kind of things happened the great bath ceremony (*mahasnana*) of Jagannath was performed. But he did not pay any heed.”

Baba Mahashaya was cast in deep anxiety. All the time he looked cheerless and mournful. One day Balarama came and said, “Baba, a great calamity has happened. A two year old calf fell yesterday into the well from which water is drawn for the bath of Jagannath on the *snana-purnima* day. The calf died. With great difficulty its dead body was taken out. As soon as Baba Mahashaya heard this he became unconscious. On regaining consciousness he began to weep and say, “O Lord! How long will this continue? When normalcy in Your service will be restored? Is it proper for You to close Your eyes and remain indifferent, when the stars run wild?”

Everyday some untoward things happened in the temple and outside. There was conflict and disturbance everywhere in the city. Baba Mahashaya always remained gloomy. Distress and anxiety were written large on his face. One could not look at him without shedding tears.

NAMA-SANKIRTAN YAJNA

One day he called Balarama Das and said, “Balarama,

something must be done to contain the stars, otherwise things will worsen."

"Let us know what should be done," said Balarama Das.

Baba Mahashaya said, "We shall have to worship the stars and do *homa*¹ and *mantra-japa*. But before we do that we shall have to do *nama-sankirtan-yajna* for nine days. During the first three days the stars will try to torment and torture and create as much disturbance in the *yajna* as they can. They will come in different forms and try to misguide you. You will have to do the *nama-yajna* with determination and single-mindedness. *Sankirtan* will be done in a closed space. No one will go out of it and no one from outside will be allowed to come into it. From time to time I shall ask you to do what Nitai wills. You will have to do it blindly without making any protest or inquiring about its purpose or propriety.

Balarama Das began to make necessary arrangements for the *yajna*. No one knew when the *yajna* would begin. One day Baba Mahashaya prepared a list of herbs, barks and leaves of various kinds and asked some local people to collect them. When they were collected he got them all boiled in water. Then mixing the boiled water with fresh water drawn from the well, he sprinkled it everywhere in the Ashram to purify it. He asked his companions to go and sprinkle the same water in the Temple of Jagannath, Panchatirtha and other holy places. He bathed in it the *Shalagram* and other deities in the Ashram and gave a glass to drink to each of the persons living in the Ashram. He drank a glass himself. Then smearing his body with the water he began to say to himself, "*Maya* has started entering slowly into the Ashram in the form of articles unsuitable to the life of non-attachment and *bhajan*. These must be discarded. If they are given away to others they will be

¹ Fire sacrifice.

detrimental to their *bhajan*. Therefore they must all be consigned to fire."

So, after returning from the Jagannath Temple that day he asked one of his disciples to bring from his room a costly silken *chadar*, which someone had brought for him a few days back. As soon as he brought the *chadar* he lighted a match-stick and set it on fire. When the *chadar* was in flames he went dancing happily into his room and brought one by one his cotton *chadar*, mosquito-net, cushion, quilt, pillow and every other thing he had and consigned it to the flames. Everyone watched the bonfire in surprise and dismay, but no one had the courage to say anything to him.

Next morning he asked everyone in the Ashram to bring out his clothes and every other thing he possessed. They began to bring them out. If anyone tried to conceal anything he could not, because the moment he came out Baba Mahashaya said angrily, naming that particular thing, "You, slave of *Maya*, why have you concealed that? Go, and bring it at once!" When everything was brought out and collected at one place, including chair, table, cot and almirah, Baba Mahashaya set fire to the collection. Flames blazed up and Baba Mahashaya asked everyone to circumambulate the fire with *kirtan*. Many people gathered to see the blaze. But Baba Mahashaya was busy all the time going round the Ashram to see if anything was left out. If he found anything he brought it and consigned it to the flames. When he was satisfied that everything was consigned to fire, he said to Balarama Das in a grave tone, "Look Balarama! Tomorrow *nama-yajna* shall begin. Ask everyone to be ready. Close all the gates of the Ashram. During the *yajna* no one inside the Ashram must go out, and no one outside must come in. Whatever I need during this period you must provide from outside. Just now you give me one hundred rupee coins."

Balarama Das went to bring the coins. In the mean time

there came Balarama Bhramaravar, a Zamindar of Kendrapara, who wore a ring studded with nine different kinds of jewel, each corresponding to one of the nine stars. Since the nine jewels were required for the *yajna*, the ring was taken. The coins brought by Balarama Das were put in nine earthen pots, which were filled with water and kept at a proper place for the *yajna*. At night Balarama brought the *mahaprasada* of Jagannath, which everyone took and went to sleep. But Baba Mahashaya did not sleep. Throughout the night he was busy cleaning every nook and corner of the Ashram. He had already warned everyone against criticizing his action, or obstructing it or asking him why he did it. Therefore no one could say anything.

Early next morning *kirtan* started. The ring with nine jewels, *Shalagram-shila*¹ and a number of other things were put in a pot and the pot was kept over the *tulasi-mancha* under the *tulasi* plant. The Ashramites circumambulated the *mancha* while performing *kirtan*. While they were doing *kirtan* Baba Mahashaya drew water from the well and poured it over them with a *lota*.² When he had thus bathed each of them, he asked them to throw their *dhوتي*, *kaupin* and *bahirvas* outside the boundary-wall. At first they objected, but when he infused *shakti* in them by giving each one of them a blow with the *lota*, they readily obeyed and began to sing and dance, as nude as they were born, like children without any self-consciousness.

EMANCIPATION OF THE PARROT

In the Ashram there were two birds, a *shuka* (parrot) and a *sarika* (a black bird of the parrot species). The *sarika* used to

¹ A deity in the form of a sacred stone from the Gandhaki River in the Himalayas.

² Small metallic container.

say to the *shuka*, "*shuka parha baba parha, din ta jaya—O shuka*, chant chant the Name, for the time is passing." The *shuka* incessantly repeated, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama*," "*Radhe-Govinda*," "*kaha sakhi Lalita Krishna tattva-katha—O sakhi Lalita*, talk of Krishna," and similar other sentences. Baba Mahashaya bathed the two birds, first in the water boiled with barks and leaves etc., and then with the purified water of the well and left them outside the cage. He then began to sing:

"Tell me, O *shuka* and *sari*
Where is my *rai Kishori*.¹
I cannot live without *Rai*
In the blazing fire of separation I die."

As Baba Mahashaya sang, both the birds kept looking at his face instead of flying away, as everyone had apprehended they would as soon as they came out of the cage.

When Baba Mahashaya stopped singing they began to circumambulate the *tulasi-mancha* with the party performing *sankirtan*. After sometime they flew into the temple and sat before the *vigraha* of Sri Radhakantha.

At midday the parrot flew and sat near *Shalagram-shila* in the pot placed over the *tulasi-mancha*. The Ashramites began to sing and dance with renewed vigour and Baba Mahashaya began to lovingly caress the parrot with his left hand. Suddenly the parrot left his physical body and entered the Divine *Lila*. Baba Mahashaya clung the parrot's body to his chest and began to dance. Grieved by the separation of the parrot everybody began to shed tears, though everyone wondered at its most auspicious end, which even the *Rishis* would covet. But Baba

¹ Srimati Radharani.

Mahashaya was not separating the dead body of the parrot from his chest. After sometime he went to his room and lay down with the body of the parrot on his chest.

It was evening. Baba Mahashaya was still inside. The Ashramites were worried, because the *bhoga* had not yet been offered to the Thakura. Balarama Das was waiting outside for Baba Mahashaya's command. Suddenly Baba shouted, "Balarama! bring some *prasada*, fruits and sweets." Balarama brought everything. Lalita Dasi began to serve. The Ashramites, all nude and pure in heart like children, started taking *prasada*. After taking *prasada* everyone slept. Towards the end of night it began to drizzle. Baba Mahashaya came out of his room and began to dance and exclaim, "Oh Lord! Nectar is falling. Come one, come all. Raise your hands and dance and chant. Let the sea of love swell and destroy the thirst and suffering of the world." All came out and began to dance and chant. After sometime Baba Mahashaya went and slept in his room with the body of the parrot on his chest as before. Slowly the day dawned. Baba Mahashaya was still asleep, but the body of the parrot was not there. Everyone was mystified. When asked as to what had happened to the parrot, he replied, "It has entered the *nitya-lila* (the eternal Divine *Lila*).

Lalita: But where has its physical body gone?

Babaji: The parrot has entered *Vraja-lila* with his body.

Lalita: The parrot entered *Vraja-lila* yesterday, leaving the body here. How could the dead body enter the *lila*?

Babaji: Though the parrot left its physical body, it was still here in its subtle body to enjoy the bliss of *sankirtan*. But when nectar rained it again entered the physical body and flew with it to *Nitaya-nikunja*, where it began to chant the Names of Radha-Krishna.

Everyone was surprised to hear this and to think of Baba Mahashaya's mercy upon the parrot.

ASHRAMITES CHARGED WITH SHAKTI

At dawn the next day, the *kirtan* was resumed. But this day the ordeal was even more difficult for the Ashramites. Baba Mahashaya made them lie down one by one and pressed their body with his feet and poured water over them. He pressed so hard that it appeared they would not survive. But as soon as he left them they felt that he had breathed new life in them and new *shakti* and they began to dance and sing with redoubled energy and enthusiasm. But he did not do this to everyone. Only a few of the young Ashramites were fortunate enough to be so treated.

A boy of twelve or thirteen, whose name was Uddhava Das had been living in the Ashram for sometime. He served the Ashram in many ways with great skill and devotion. But he suffered from an awful disease. He had been given all kinds of treatment, but without any result. Baba Mahashaya all of a sudden made him lie down and began to crush his body with his feet. Though the boy was strong and stout, it was impossible for him to bear the weight of Baba Mahashaya's body. All were afraid that the boy would die. But Baba Mahashaya, totally unmindful of anything, went on pressing him with all his force from head to feet. After sometime some phlegm came out of his nose and then a round worm about six inches long. Then Baba Mahashaya turned him over with his feet and made him stand up. The boy began to dance with joy. From that day not only his disease was cured, he became the very image of *bhakti*.

Kirtan continued. Babaji Mahashaya went inside the temple and began to pour water on the deities as well. He was doing this with utmost absorption and complete unawareness of anything else. So, the time passed on and no one, not even the Thakura was given anything to eat. No one had the courage to go and say anything to him. For a little while he went inside his room

for some work. Some of the Ashramites began to say to each other, "So much time has passed, but neither Thakura has eaten anything nor Babaji Mahashaya. If we had even some fruits the *bhoga* could have been offered to the Thakura and *prasada* given to Baba Mahashaya." They said it so slowly amidst the sound of *kirtan* and *khol-karatal* that there was no chance of any other persons hearing it. But the very next moment Babaji Mahashaya came out of his room and said, "You need not comment upon Thakura's *bhoga* and my eating." If someone had entertained an adverse thought in his mind, which he did not express, he began to castigate him for it. In this train he went to the length of enumerating the sins he had committed in his past life and absolving him of them all.

At 3 o'clock Baba Mahashaya asked Balarama to bring some fruits. The fruits were offered to Thakura and eaten by everyone, but there was nothing else to eat. This created anxiety among the Ashramites for Baba Mahashaya. At this stage the stars, already on the look out for an opportunity, vitiated their understanding. The seniors among them began to think that Baba Mahashaya's total absorption in non-worldly affairs had made him mentally unsound. They forgot all about the warning given by him and began to devise ways and means for deflecting his mind from the *yajna*. At night they asked the Ashramites to stealthily go out of the Ashram one by one. Five or six of them went out. When Baba Mahashaya did not see them in the Ashram, he went out to search them with a bamboo in his hand, but could not find them.

DIVYONMAD OR DIVINE MADNESS

He saw the lamp-post in the lane shining bright and shouted "*Maya, Maya!*" He put it off by throwing water over it and began to dance singing:

*"yogamaya chichakti vishuddha sattaya parinati,
tara shakti jive dekhaite;
shei rupa ratana bhaktaganera gurha dhana,
prakata kaila nitya lila haite."*

The lines speak of the inconceivable power of *Yogamaya*, which is the same as *Svarupa-shakti* or the Internal Potency of Krishna. *Yogamaya* is the prime minister, the prime designer and executor of Divine *Lila*. As against *Gunamaya*, the external potency of Krishna, which clouds the vision of the *jiva* and causes bondage, *Yogamaya* brings about his emancipation and union with Krishna. Since Baba Mahashaya was at this time engaged in a fight against *Maya* (*Gunamaya*) he often repeated these lines, perhaps by way of a challenge to *Maya*.

After putting off the lamp Baba Mahashaya asked Lalita Dasi and Kusum Dasi to stand on either side of the gate and made the Ashramites lie down in the lane one after another in such a way that the passage was blocked.

One may wonder why Babaji Mahashaya indulged in seemingly erratic behaviour of this kind, and may even be induced to regard it as a sign of madness, if suitable explanation cannot be found. Explanation can perhaps be found. Perhaps he imposed such actions upon his followers as exercises in total, unquestioning surrender, which is necessary for spiritual progress; perhaps he wanted thus to help them rise above body-consciousness and overcome such human weakness as shame (*lajja*), fear (*bhaya*) and hatred (*ghrina*) etc., which are obstacles in spiritual development. But whatever the explanation we cannot escape the conclusion that the actions were extraordinary and indicated an extraordinary state of mind, which may be called madness. But the question is what kind of madness. It cannot be ordinary madness, because Baba Mahashaya was much above that level and his very touch or

will could cure that kind of ailment, as we have seen it did in the case of Balmukunda Babu, the deputy magistrate. It must be divine madness or *divyonmad*, as the *shastras* call it. For his actions were not his own. He was only an instrument in the hands of the Lord, to Whom he was completely surrendered. His actions, therefore, must be beyond the level of our finite understanding. If we judge them we must judge them not by their appearance but by their consequences, which were wholesome, both physically and spiritually, not only for his followers, but for the whole city of Puri, for, as we shall see, he was able to subdue the stars and bring about peace. The divine character of his actions is also borne out by the miraculous nature of the happenings that followed.

IN POLICE CUSTODY

When the lamp was put off and the passage was blocked, the police watchman on duty thought that Baba Mahashaya had gone mad and went to report everything to Purna Babu, the police sub-inspector in charge of the police outpost in that area. Kusum Dasi said to Baba Mahashaya, "The watchman has seen everything. The police may take some action. Therefore why not ask the Ashramites lying on the lane to come in?" Baba Mahashaya gave her a slap and went down into the lane. He found that almost all Ashramites had fled. He began to go up and down the lane to search them with a six feet long bamboo in his hand. He knocked hard at every door in the lane. A wave of consternation spread throughout the neighbourhood. Soon came a number of policemen to arrest Baba Mahashaya. He dashed upon them shouting "*Maya, Maya!*" with such force that they had to run for their life. The sub-inspector did not know what to do. He did not want to use force or do any harm to Baba Mahashaya, because he knew that he was worshipable

and everyone in the city had high regard for him. But he also could not let him have his way and create havoc all round. So he went himself with a police force and tried to arrest him. Baba Mahashaya dashed upon them too and sent them a hundred yards back. The sagacious sub-inspector then thought of a clever device. He took off his uniform and approached Baba Mahashaya alone in plain clothes. Then Baba Mahashaya smiled and said, "Purna, what brings you here?"

Purna Babu said with folded hands, "Baba, I have come on duty. If you do not help me, I shall lose my job."

"Why? What has happened?"

"You have to go to the police-station."

"Oh! Why did you not tell me earlier. Come and bind me."

As he said this he stretched his two hands for binding. The sub-inspector tied his hands firmly, yet sorrowfully. But Baba said, "Look Purna, I will not go on foot."

"Tell me how you would go Baba?" Purna inquired with folded hands.

"I will go upon someone's shoulders. But not upon anyone's."

As he said this he shouted "Garuda, Garuda!" Immediately a man, whose name was Gaur came running and bowed down. Baba Mahashaya climbed his shoulders and he began to carry him dancing and tripping. As soon as he went outside the lane, he said to himself, "What wonder! Barha Baba's big body is lighter than even a child's! How can it be!" The moment he said this he began to feel that he was carrying a mountain over his shoulders and cried out, "Oh Baba! I will die, I will die! Have mercy on me." Three police men rushed forward to help him. Baba Mahashaya lay on their shoulders with only his legs resting on the shoulders of Gaur.

The sub-inspector kept Baba Mahashaya in a room with a number of windows in the police-station and closed the door.

Baba Mahashaya said to the sub-inspector, "I shall make water." The sub-inspector perhaps thought that it was not safe to bring him out. He said, "Baba, you can do it inside." Baba smiled and said, "I want water to wash!"

The sub-inspector went to bring water. Baba started making water and kept doing so for half an hour, while the sub-inspector kept waiting outside with water. He was surprised to see that the whole room was flooded and urine was running out of the room into the drain like a stream. In utter helplessness he said with folded hands, "Baba! Excuse me. The *thana* (police-station) will be drowned," Baba laughed and said, "Allright! Give me water."

On getting the news that Baba Mahashaya had been taken to the police station many influential people of Puri went there and secured his release. However, the news spread all over in the city and outside that Baba Mahashaya had gone mad. People started coming from outside. From Vrindavan came Govinda Baba, Nityasvarupa Brahmachari and Kishori Dasi and from Calcutta Rama Das Baba, Jogen Babu, Pulin Babu, Jatin Babu and several others. Baba Mahashaya began to behave towards them in a mysterious manner. Those who thought he was mad, towards them he behaved like a perfectly normal person, without any sign of madness. Those who thought he was a *mahapurusha*, towards them he behaved like one, who was mad. It was difficult to arrive at any conclusion. When anyone persisted in ascertaining the real position by asking direct questions he only laughed and danced evasively. Nityasvarupa Brahmachari consulted some advanced devotees and the *shastras* and arrived at the conclusion that he was in the state of *divyonmad* (divine madness), a heightened state of *mahabhava*.¹ He went to Baba Mahashaya to confirm this from

¹ The highest state of *Madhurya-bhakti*, characterizing the maids of Vraja.

him directly. But when Baba Mahashaya saw him he smiled and said, "Nityasvarupa! I am mad" and began to dance singing, "*yogamaya chishakti... etc.*"

One day some people came to test him. They turned both of his hands behind the back and tied them together with a thin piece of cloth. He allowed himself to be so bound like a child. They left him alone in this condition in his room and closed the door. After an hour, when they opened the door they were surprised to see that he was not there. A few minutes later, they saw him sitting in a niche in the wall, which was about a foot and a half in length and one foot in width and in which even a five year old child could not sit. But he was sitting there comfortably and smiling and the piece of cloth with which his hands were tied was lying on the floor with its knot untied. They were convinced that he was not mad but a *mahapurusha*, whose ways were inscrutable and they began to curse themselves for trying to test him. But soon after Baba again began to behave in a manner which gave rise to the suspicion that he was insane.

DEPARTURE FOR CALCUTTA

After sometime Rama Das, Pulin Dada and others thought that it would perhaps be better to take Baba Mahashaya to Calcutta. They proposed this to him. He agreed. On an auspicious day they decided to leave for Calcutta with Baba Mahashaya. Balarama Das and many others went to see them off at the station. They were apprehensive that Baba Mahashaya might not behave properly in the train. But to their satisfaction they found that he did not do anything, which might create a problem for them. On the other hand, as soon as he got into the train he began to dance and sing, "*yogamaya chichakti... etc.*" As the train started moving he called Balarama and said, "Look

Balarama, you must within a week go to Konarka Tirtha and worship the *nava-grahas* and make suitable offerings worth not less than a hundred rupees."

THE STATE OF MAHABHAVA

The train arrived at Howrah Station. Baba Mahashaya was still in the state of *mahabhava*. He was taken to the other side of the Howrah Bridge, where on seeing a barber, he insisted on having a shave. The barber said, "Baba, the razor I have has been used in shaving so many other heads. How can I apply the same razor to your head?" Baba Mahashaya's companions were pleased to hear this, because they apprehended that in his state of *mahabhava*, if he shook his head while shaving, he might have a cut. But Baba Mahashaya said, "No, I am the lowest of all. You must shave." The barber consulted the companions and said, "Allright Baba, I shall shave." He sat down with a palm-leaf in his hand and pretended to shave. After sometime he said, "Baba, the shave is done." "But where are my hair?" asked Baba. The barber replied, "Your *aprakrita* (transcendental) hair have gone to the *aprakrita* world."

Baba Mahashaya then went to the *ghat*¹ near the bridge and started bathing in the river Ganges. But in his state of *bhava* he thought he was bathing in the Yamuna. So, he began to recite verses in praise of Yamuna. When he heard another person, bathing near him, reciting verses in praise of Ganga, he began to look all round with a start, as if he was suddenly transported from one region to another. Then realizing that he was bathing in Ganga, he began to recite *stotras* in praise of Ganga.

After his bath Baba Mahashaya was taken to the Ashram

¹ A landing place in a river or in a pond.

of Kamakhya Das Babaji, who began to look after him and his companions with utmost care. Baba Mahashaya was always in the state of *mahabhava*, lost completely within himself. If anyone asked a question he sometimes replied after four or five minutes, sometimes did not. Sometimes he laughed, sometimes wept and sometimes danced in ecstasy. He was often nude. If any one gave him something to wear, he wore, but the next moment gave it away to someone and again became nude. At the time of eating he behaved like a child. He did not want to eat. But his companions had to entreat and cajole to make him eat.

IN THE GARDEN HOUSE OF KEDAR BABU

After a few days Baba Mahashaya shifted to Kedar Babu's garden-house near by. On entering the garden he saw that some plants were tied up. He untied them and began to dance in ecstasy.

There was a pond in the garden with a *ghat*. He got two more *ghats* constructed. The *ghat* which was on the side of the garden, he called Radhakunda and those on either side of it were called Lalitakunda and Shyamakunda. He imagined these *ghats* to be Radhakunda, Shyamakunda and Lalitakunda of Vrindavan and began to behave accordingly in respect of them.

He asked Nilaratan Dada to manage the kitchen and to cook and serve in earthen pots. The pots were to be kept in Radhakunda after use and used again the next day after they were cleaned. No metallic pot was to be used.

Kamakhya Das Babaji asked, "Can the *bhoga* be offered again in the earthen pot once used?"

Babaji: Why not? Your *upasana* (worship) is meaningless if you do not have faith in *raj* (holy dust).

Kamakhya: But the *raj* and the pots made of *raj* are holy only in Vrindavan, not everywhere.

Babaji: Your *shastras* and the *mahatmas* say that Vrajamandala and Gauramandala are non-different. Is this principle only to be talked about and not practised?

Kamakhya Das Babaji had to give in.

Ordinarily Baba Mahashaya was always open to the advice of his companions. But in the state of *divyonmad* he was the master of his own self. He did not like that anyone else should tell him what he should or should not do. But Govinda Dada, Rama Dada and Nityasvarupa Brahmachari, who were always anxious about his health, tried to obstruct him, when he did anything which was not good for his health. Therefore he sent them out of the garden and asked everyone not to let them in. Later he asked Govinda Dada and Nityasvarupa to go to Vrindavan, which they did. Another noteworthy trait of his behaviour in this state was his intolerance of any item of luxury and any kind of talisman. If anyone came to the garden wearing a golden ring, golden buttons or chain, or wrist watch or a talisman he asked him to throw it away into the pond and did not rest until it was thrown.

THE MIRACLES OF RADHAKUNDA

Once an old man, who was an asthma patient came wearing a talisman. He objected to his talisman being thrown, because, he said, the moment the talisman was removed, asthma aggravated and life became unbearable. Baba Mahashaya said, "Do not worry. Your asthma will be cured the moment you dip into Radhakunda." The old man threw the talisman into the pond and dipped into it. Surprisingly his asthma was cured for ever.

One day came Dinabandhu Kavyatirtha. He was wearing a golden ring, golden chain, a number of talismans and a wrist watch. As soon as Baba Mahashaya saw him, he asked him to

throw everything he was wearing, except the clothes, into the pond. For a minute he stood still. Then saying, "The guru's order must be obeyed," he went to the pond and threw everything one by one in the pond and came back. He sat before Baba Mahashaya for two hours talking about various subjects relating to *Krishna-lila*. During this period he saw that the rings, chains watches and talismans of a number of other people were also thrown into the pond. He began to think, "Why should Baba Mahashaya do this? Has he really gone mad? Instead of throwing the costly things into the pond he could use them in some way or the other in the service of the poor and the needy. In case he intended thereby to teach detachment, that was a mental process and had nothing to do with the externals." Babaji Mahashaya came to know this. He smiled and said, "Kavyatirtha! You need not be sorry for the loss of all those costly things." Immediately he went and plunged into the pond and in a single dive brought out all the things that had so far been thrown into it. Then handing over to Kavyatirtha the things belonging to him he said, "See if these are yours." All those sitting were surprised. They began to say to one another, "How amazing! Things belonging to different people were thrown at different places in the pond at different times and Baba Mahashaya brought them all together in a single dive!"

TRANSCENDENTAL CHARACTER OF HARINAMA

One day a man came with a number of thick sheets of paper on each of which one of the following *mantras* or *kirtan*-songs relating to *Harinama* was written:

1. *"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare."*

2. "Sri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda,
Hare Krishna-Hare Rama, Sri Radhe-Govinda."
3. "Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama."
4. "Harernama harernama harernamaiva kevalam,
kalau nastyeva nastyeva nastyeva gatiranyatha."
5. "Prana Gaura-Nityananda."
6. "Haribol."

Baba Mahashaya asked the man to throw the papers into the pond. The man complied hesitatingly. Surprisingly the papers drowned. At that time Sriyuta Govindananda Maharaja, a disciple of Avadhuta Jnananda Swami was there. He said, "Baba, you always glorify the Name. How is it that all the Names have drowned?"

Babaji: Govinda's Name is *chinmaya* (transcendental). It cannot drown.

Govinda: But I saw them drowning with my own eyes.

Babaji: Oh, that was only to test your faith. Whether one believes it or not the *shakti* of the Name is eternal. It can never diminish or disappear.

But no one believed this. The next day at 8 a.m. Baba Mahashaya said to Govinda smilingly, "Govinda! Go to Radhakunda and see whether the Name is eternal and indestructible or not. If you find the papers swimming bring them here."

Govinda went to the pond. Others also went. They were amazed to see all the papers containing the Name swimming near the *ghat*! The devotee, who had brought the papers,

picked them up and said, "How strange! Having been in water for twenty-four hours, the Names should have been destroyed or blurred, but they are looking brighter!" He brought the papers and gave them to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya began to paste them on the walls inside and outside the hall, in which he was staying.

One might ask why the Name behaves differently when the same test is performed by ordinary persons. The answer is that the Name manifested itself fully in this case because Baba Mahashaya was pure in heart, which means that he was free from offenses. It does not manifest itself in other cases because people are not free from offenses. Lack of faith in the Name is an offense.

Baba Mahashaya adopted yet another device to prove the eternal, self-evident and self-shining character of the Name. He started *ashtaprahar-kirtan* in the hall. The doors and windows of the hall were closed. The hall was purified by sprinkling *ghee* all over the walls and the floor. Earthen lamps containing *ghee* were lighted. The papers bearing the Divine Name, which were pasted on the walls were already wet with *ghee* sprinkled on them. The soot rising in flakes in the smoke of the lamps got mixed with *ghee* and covered the Names. When Govindananda saw this, he said to himself, "Now, who can say that the Name is indestructible, self-evident and self-shining? The sticky paint, which cannot be removed, has destroyed its self-shining character for good."

This was not hidden from Baba Mahashaya. He said, "Govindananda, what are you thinking? The Name has become black, the blackness cannot go and the self-evident, self-shinning character of the Name stands contradicted. You are mistaken." The same moment he sprinkled a few drops of water from the pond over the papers. Blackness disappeared and the Names began to look brighter than before. He said to

Govindananda, "Now see, how the Name is self-evident and self-shining?"

Govindananda: So it is now. But was it not covered by the paint before?

Babaji: If it was actually covered how could the sticky substance, which seemed to cover it, disappear so easily? How could it again become uncovered?

Govindananda: It became uncovered and manifest on account of your *shakti*.

Babaji: No, you do not understand. How can a thing, which is self-manifest, be manifested by anyone else. The Name is self-manifest and always remains so. It is your clouded vision that makes it look clouded and covered.

Govindananda: I fail to understand how what I actually saw as covered was not actually covered. You must explain.

Babaji: Then listen. Once in the month of April or May, when the sun was bright, thick clouds suddenly covered the sky and it became dark. Some people said that the sun was set. Some said it was covered by the clouds, some said that the clouds had destroyed its lustre. But a wise man began to think. He said, "The sun is much bigger than earth. How can a patch of clouds cover it? The clouds have, therefore, obstructed our vision. The sun is, as ever, bright and radiant." Similarly, the Name was neither destroyed nor discoloured. It was the black paint that had obstructed your vision. If an eternal and self-evident object is covered or destroyed by anything, how can it be called eternal and self-evident? Just as Bhagavan is eternal, self-evident and self-manifest, so are His Name, Form and *Dham*. They do not suffer any kind of transformation or transmutation.

SANNYASA-DIKSHA OF RAMA DAS

As the *ashtaprakar-sankirtan-yajna* was going on Kamakhya

Das Babaji said to Baba Mahashaya, "In this *yajna* everyone is here except Rama Das. If you kindly permit, I shall go and bring him.

Babaji: Where is he?

Kamakhya: He is chanting the Name outside the gate of the garden. He does not come in, because you have asked him to stay out.

Babaji: He is self-willed. He thinks that I am mad and creates obstacles for me.

Kamakhya: Your disciples love you. Their love is pure and selfless. They cannot bear to see that any harm comes to you. They create obstacles for you only when they apprehend that your behaviour may undermine your health. They can even sacrifice their life for you. How can they be wilful?

Baba Mahashaya had to yield and ask Kamakhya Das to bring Rama Das. As Rama Das came and made obeisance to him his eyes wetted. He embraced him and bathed him with his tears. He then gave him his *prasadi dor-kopin*¹ and uttered the *sannyasa-mantra* in his ear. He said, "This is your *bhek* (Vaishnava *sannyasa*)."

MORE MIRACLES

During his stay in the garden house of Kedar Babu, Baba Mahashaya did not allow anyone to do anything without consulting him. Every morning the cook had to ask him what dishes to prepare for the *bhoga* and in what quantity. Everyday he asked him to cook for seven or eight people, but not less than twenty-five or thirty persons dined everyday. If on any

¹ In the ceremony of *sannyasa*, *kopin* (a cord or 'dor' to wear around the waist and a piece of cloth, to be used as underwear) and *bahirvas* (outer garment) are given to the devotee receiving initiation.

particular day, when more people were expected for the dinner, the cook suggested that more might be cooked, he said angrily, "You cook as I say. Your responsibility is cooking, not service. Service is the responsibility of Nitai Chand. Can there be any shortage in His service? Do you find any shortage at the end, when everyone has eaten? Do you have to eat less?"

One day Baba Mahashaya was talking with a number of visitors, when a woman came weeping and wailing and fell at his feet. He said, "Ma! Why do you weep?"

Woman: Baba, my only child is suffering from plague. There is no chance of his life. If he dies I cannot live. Kindly save him or I commit suicide at your feet.

Babaji: Ma! Do not lose heart. Go and chant the Name of the Lord and give him the Lord's *charanamrita*. The merciful Lord will have mercy on you.

Woman: Baba! I do not want to listen anything. I cannot do anything. If you do not save him, I shall commit suicide here and now at your feet and leave the world even before my child. The woman said this and began to weep and cry. Baba Mahashaya tried his best to soothe her by his sweet words, but could not. Her heart rending cries made everyone weep. At last Baba Mahashaya said, "Can you bring the boy here?" "I can" said the woman. She went running and brought him. The boy was about ten years old. Baba Mahashaya said to the woman, "Go and give him a dip in Radhakunda." The woman obeyed unhesitatingly. After three or four minutes the boy got new life and came out of Radhakunda without anyone's help. The woman got her lost child. She took him to Baba Mahashaya and made him lie and surrender at his feet. Baba Mahashaya embraced him and said to his mother, "Ma, you also go and have a dip in Radhakunda and then take the boy home. Nitai Chand has saved him. Now there is nothing to fear." The

devotees sitting near Baba Mahashaya began to admire the illiterate woman for her implicit faith, which enabled her to save her child and cursed themselves for their lack of faith.

At this time there used to be a crowd of patients of all kinds around Baba Mahashaya. He had only one medicine for all kinds of disease. He asked every patient to go and have a dip in Radhakunda. But in the case of an opium eater he adopted a different and peculiar device. The opium eater was a disciple of Sri Anukulchandra Das, an inhabitant of the village Hawarhakasanda. One day he came to Baba Mahashaya for his *darshan*. But before he came he took off his *kurta* and kept it along with every other thing he had in the house of Kamakhya Das Babaji. He had a small pack of opium, which he put carefully inside the pocket of the *kurta*. When he went to Baba Mahashaya and sat down before him after making obeisance, Baba Mahashaya said, "Anukul, what have you done with the pack of opium you had?" Anukul Babu was taken aback. He said, "I have kept it in the house of Kamakhya Das Babaji."

Baba Mahashaya said to one of his companions, "You go to the house of Kamakhya Das Babaji and bring the pack of opium, which he has kept there in the pocket of his *kurta*." Anukul Babu himself offered to go and bring the pack but Baba Mahashaya said, "No, you needn't!"

When the pack was brought Baba Mahashaya asked him how much opium it contained. Anukul Babu replied, "I purchased ten grams yesterday. I have taken one-fourth and the rest is there. I am so badly addicted to it that I cannot even move without it. I can live for days without food, but not for a day without opium."

As Anukul Babu was saying this Baba Mahashaya was rolling the opium between his hands to round it off into a ball. As soon as the ball was ready he swallowed it and said, "You will not have to take opium anymore." Anukul Babu used to say,

"From that day my addiction to opium was gone. I never even felt or thought that I ever was an opium addict."

One day a blind man came and said, "Baba, I have lost both of my eyes and am in great distress. Kindly restore my eyesight." Baba Mahashaya said, "Go and have a dip in the pond." He went and came back after dipping. Baba Mahashaya then touched both of his eyes with a thin iron bar lying near him and his eyesight was completely restored. The man, overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude towards Baba Mahashaya, fell at his feet and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya said, "Go and call Nitai Chand from the depth of your heart. No calamity will ever befall to you."

At this time Baba Mahashaya's mental condition was like that of a child. Generally he was nude. If anyone gave him some clothes to wear, he wore, but soon gave them away to someone. Sometimes he said, "No, I shall not bathe." He was always disinclined to eat and could with great difficulty be cajoled into eating a little.

One day Vrindavan Dada came from Faridpur. As soon as Baba Mahashaya saw him, he exclaimed, "O Vrindavan! You have come! I have not eaten with relish for ages. Today I shall eat from your hand with relish. I feel very hungry today." His disciples were happy to hear this. They brought *mahaprasada* and Vrindavan Das began to feed him. But after eating only a few morsels he stopped eating. Vrindavan began to persuade him to eat, sometimes by flattering, sometimes by chiding or bidding. When he bade him, he said, "Am I your disciple so as to abide by your bidding?" Vrindavan Das said, "What? Are you not my disciple? You are my disciple, I am your guru. If you do not eat on my bidding, you will commit guru-*aparadha* (offense against guru)." Then Baba Mahashaya had to eat. In this way

whenever Vrindavan Das asked him to do a certain thing, he obeyed saying, "The order of the guru must be obeyed."

The companions of Baba Mahashaya were happy at this. Whenever they wanted Baba Mahashaya to do something, which they thought he would not be inclined to do, they could get it done through Vrindavan Dada. Everyone was surprised to see how deeply Baba Mahashaya and Vrindavan Dada loved each other. One of the devotees said to Rama Das, "Dada, I never saw this *mahatma* with Baba Mahashaya. Who is he and why does Baba Mahashaya love him so much?"

Rama Das replied, "His former name was, Sriyuta Sudhanya Kumara Mitra. He is a great soul. In a way he is my first *siksha-guru*. In our young age both of us lived with Sri Jagadbandhu Prabhu. But for some reason we had to leave him. He went to Vrindavan, took initiation from Prema Das, a *siddha mahatma* and began to do *bhajan* under his guidance. I do not know how he suddenly became mad and began to roam about in different places. In 1896 I saw him in Nimtala Ghat in Calcutta, when I was going to bathe there with Baba Mahashaya. His condition at that time was very bad and it was difficult to recognize him. But as soon as he saw me, he said, "O Rama Das! Will you give me something to eat?" I recognized him from his voice. I told all about him to Baba Mahashaya. He took him to the house of Mukunda Ghosh, where we were staying. On seeing Baba Mahashaya his restlessness and fidgetiness were gone. He became calm and steady to the extreme. He did not talk to anyone. If he sat down he remained sitting until someone made him stand or move. He did not ask for food, but ate if someone gave him something to eat. In this condition Baba Mahashaya took him to Puri. One day while he was doing *sankirtan*, he embraced him and said, "I take upon myself all your past sins. Now you are well and there is nothing to fear. Always sing the glory and the Name of Nitai Chand and be happy." He became

perfectly normal. After sometime on Baba Mahashaya's advice he went to Faridpur and started a dispensary. From the income of the dispensary he renders valuable service to the Vaishnavas. His love for Baba Mahashaya is boundless. It is on account of this that Baba Mahashaya submits to whatever he says."

One day Kunja Babu's mother, who had unstinted motherly affection for Baba Mahashaya, brought a number of delicious things for him to eat. As soon as Baba Mahashaya saw her he jumped into her lap like a child and began to suck her breast. The mother sat down to feed him with her own hand. Kunja Babu's mother was too old. It was impossible for her to sit with Baba Mahashaya in her lap. But both Baba Mahashaya and Kunja Babu's mother were in *bhava*. The realm of *bhava* is not governed by the laws of this world. It is governed by *Yogamaya*, who makes the impossible possible.

One day when Baba Mahashaya was having a shave, he took the razor from the barber and chopped off about four ounces of flesh from a part of the sole of his foot, which had a spot. His disciples looked at it grievously, but he neither groaned nor whined. He chopped off the sole as one would chop off a piece of wood. Blood began to stream out. He applied some earth on the wound, and the blood ceased. Every day he rubbed earth on the wound till it dried. But every time he had a shave, he chiselled the dried part with the razor, and the wound again became wet. His disciples were worried about this. One evening they were filled with great anxiety and were saying to each other, "God knows how long this will continue. Who can stop him from doing this? It does not hurt him in the least, but we are deeply hurt to see him doing it time after time." Next morning they saw that the wound had completely dried and it appeared as if there was never any wound at all.

One day came Sri Basanta Kumara Niyogi from Chandanagar. As soon as he prostrated himself before Baba

Mahashaya in obeisance, Baba said smilingly, "O Basanta, you have come!" As he said this he put the great toe of his left foot into his mouth and he began to suck the toe with pleasure. He continued to suck for twenty minutes. Suddenly he got up and began to dance in ecstasy. All the *sattvika-bhavas* appeared on his body. Like a mad person he uttered some meaningless and broken words *staccato*. His eyes were wet and face flushed. The Ashramites were surprised to see him in this condition. Baba Mahashaya asked them to do *sankirtan*. In the midst of *kirtan* he embraced Basanta Babu and said, "Enjoy the gift of Nitai Chand to your heart's content and be blest." Then slapping him on the back with his left hand he sent him away. Thus charged with the current of divine love, he proceeded towards the city. Whoever touched him in that state was also charged with the current and began to behave like him.

CONVERSION OF RASIKA BABU

One day Sri Rasika Lal Pal came to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya was at that time in meditative mood. As soon as Rasika Lal made obeisance before him, he said with a start, "Baba, what is your name?"

"My name is Rasika Lal Pal. I am *svarna-banik* by caste."

"*Svarna-banik*!" Baba Mahashaya was filled with emotion. His eyes became wet. He said, "*svarna-baniks* are the people upon whom Nityananda Prabhu's mercy was unparalleled. But I see no sign of that on your face. You have big mustache and no *kanthi*."

Rasika Babu felt abashed. But he said gently, "Baba, *bhajan* is essentially a mental discipline. Does it also have anything to do with a man's external appearance?"

Babaji: Why not? Our state of mind depends to a large extent upon our external form and appearance. If you go to the

temple after bathing, wearing *dhoti* and *chadar* that have been washed, you would find yourself in the particular state of mind necessary for worship. But would you find yourself in the same state if you go to the temple wearing coat, pant, tie and hat and with a cigar in your mouth?

Rasika: No. That is not possible.

Babaji: It is not only the dress and form that has bearing upon our mental state. Our mental state depends also on what we generally eat and do.

Rasika Babu went home. When he came again after a couple of days he was a changed man. He had no mustache and his dress was so ordinary that it was difficult to recognize him. He said to Baba Mahashaya with folded hands. "I shall be blest if you kindly grace my home." Baba Mahashaya went to his home the next day along with his companions and performed *kirtan*. After *kirtan* he gave him *mantra* on his insistence.

Rasika Babu had a disease, which could not be cured even after long treatment. He used to pass blood in his urine. After Baba Mahashaya gave him *mantra*, he embraced him and said, "Rasika, your disease is cured. I have taken upon myself all your sins. You can now pray to Nitai Chand with a pure heart and be blest."

Rasika Babu requested Baba Mahashaya to live for some time in his garden-house in Kashipur. Baba Mahashaya shifted from Kedar Babu's garden to the garden-house of Rasika Babu.

WITNESSING SRI CHAITANYA-LILA

After Baba Mahashaya had stayed in the garden of Rasika Babu for a few days, Jogen Babu took him to his house in Darjiparha. One day Girish Ghosh, the famous dramatist, came to Jogen Babu's house for the *darshan* of Baba Mahashaya. He was wearing a number of talismans and was hardly able

to speak on account of severe asthma. Baba Mahashaya said, "Girish Babu, throw away all the talismans you are wearing. Nitai Chand will bless you and your asthma shall be cured." Girish Babu had great regard for Baba Mahashaya, but he could not believe what he said. He took off all the talismans and put them in his pocket. Baba Mahashaya saw that he lacked faith. Still he gave him an embrace, which cured his disease for ever. Since then Garish Babu had desired that Baba Mahashaya should go to his theatre hall one day and watch the performance. In reciprocation Baba Mahashaya said to Jogen Babu one day, "Jogen, I shall go and see the theatre today." The same evening Garish Babu came and said, "Baba, today we shall perform Chaitanya-*lila*. If you kindly come and see it would be fine." Baba Mahashaya smiled and said, "Let Nitai's will be done."

Baba Mahashaya reached the theatre well in time for the performance along with his companions. Seats were already reserved for them in the first row. When they had taken their seats the performance began. That day's performance was different from the performance on other days. With Baba Mahashaya sitting in the hall as the veritable dynamo of *bhakti* the whole atmosphere in the hall was so charged with the current of *bhakti* that the actors forgot their identity and were acting as if they were themselves the persons, whose parts they were playing, as if it was not a drama that was going on, but the eternal, transcendental *lila* itself that had come down on the stage. Everything was going on well. The audience felt that they were transported into the transcendental Navadwip Dham itself, where they were watching Sri Gauranga singing and dancing in ecstasy in the house of Srivas, and Nityananda, going singing and dancing from door to door to preach *Harinama* and to convert sinners like Jagai and Madhai into saints. But as soon as they saw Madhai attacking Nityananda

with a brick-bat Baba Mahashaya made a loud inarticulate sound and fell senseless on the ground. Dinabandhu Kavyatirtha tried to hold him, but as soon as he touched him, he was charged with the current of divine love and began to dance in ecstasy. All others, who touched him, were similarly affected, irrespective of the fact whether they were devotees or non-devotees, believers or non-believers.

Girish Babu had to stop the drama. He was surprised to see all the *sattvika-bhavas* appearing on the body of Baba Mahashaya. He was also overwhelmed by a new current of devotion, which swept away his pride as a dramatist and made him as humble as a blade of grass. When Baba Mahashaya regained consciousness he fell at his feet and said with folded hands, "Baba, I took pride in the thought that I wrote *Chaitanya-lila* and presented it on the stage. But by your grace I have now realized that *Chaitanya-lila* manifests itself. I have also realized that I have wasted all my life in sinful activities on account of which I will not find place even in hell. But your *kirtan*-song, which I heard the other day still rings in my ears:

*"What is bygone is bygone, let it be gone,
Now hold on Nitai's feet for ever and anon.
For there is time yet, let it not fly,
Make hay while the sun shines and the weather is dry."*

So bless me so that I do not waste my time in trifles and hold on Nitai's lotus feet to win His grace before I die." Baba Mahashaya was happy to hear this. He embraced and blessed him and took his leave.

REVIVAL OF A CORPSE

One morning Baba Mahashaya went to Nimtala Ghat for

bathing in the Ganges along with Jogen Babu and a number of other disciples. While he was bathing, some Marvaries brought the dead body of a young lady for funeral. As Baba saw this he was for sometime lost within himself. He said to himself, "Ah! The lady is going without hearing the Name of the Lord. Poor thing! she will have to suffer the unending cycle of birth and death." Then he said to Radhavinoda and Phani, "Go and see what the Marvaries are doing with the body. Ask them not to burn it till I come."

Radhavinoda and Phani went and saw that the Marvaries had placed the dead body on the pyre and were about to set fire to it. They said to them, "Our Guru Maharaja has requested that you may please wait till he comes." They did not heed. Baba Mahashaya then sent Jogen Babu, who said to them entreatingly, "Please for God's sake wait a while, our Gurudeva is coming." The Marvaries looked amazingly at Jogen Babu and each other and did not know what to do. In the meantime Baba Mahashaya came. He said, "Brethren, please bring the corpse down from the pyre." As he said this his heart was full of compassion, his eyes beamed with affection and his voice rang with a note that was divine and benedictory. They brought the body down. Baba Mahashaya asked Rama Das to sit behind the head of the body and Radhavinoda and Phani to sit on its either side. He himself sat near its feet, holding its great toes with both of his hands. He then began to chant, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama,*" and asked all others to join him in the chanting. A crowd gathered on the scene. Everybody was chanting and looking eagerly and expectantly now at Baba Mahashaya, now at the dead body. This continued for half an hour. Then suddenly Baba Mahashaya exclaimed, "*Jai Nitai!*" and pulled the toes of the lady with a jerk. And lo! The lady opened her eyes. The Marvaries sprang with joy. Everyone shouted "*Haribol!*" while the lady looked all

round with bewilderment. Baba Mahashaya said to her, "Do you recognize your relatives?" She replied in the affirmative by a gesture of the eye.

Baba Mahashaya asked the Marvaries to bring some milk. The lady was made to drink milk. She drank it little by little. As she drank the cries of "*Haribol!*" again rent the sky.

The news spread like wild fire that a *sadhu* had brought a dead body back to life at Nimtala Ghat. Crowd after crowd of people began to pour in from different directions. This continued for about an hour and a half. Then Baba Mahashaya ceased to hold the lady's toes and she also ceased to breathe and closed her eyes.

Her relations fell at Baba's feet and prayed that she might be made to live and sent back home. But Baba Mahashaya said, "How can I do what Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself did not think it proper to do with the son of Srivas? Could He not make him live longer after He had brought him back to life for a short while? He did not, because He did not think it proper to undo what fate had done or God had willed. Now, God had willed to demonstrate to the people, who would not believe without seeing, that the power of the Name is infinite and that it can even bring the dead back to life. So He has done it. One must know that the Name of God is even more powerful than God. It can do easily what God cannot. If one believes in the power of the Name, nothing else remains to be done. Without the mercy of the Name one can neither achieve *prema* nor enter the realm of the Divine *Lila*." With these words Baba Mahashaya soothed every one and then went back to bathe again in the Ganges.

THE GRAND NAGARA-KIRTAN IN CALCUTTA

We have seen how Baba Mahashaya's heart always

melted to see the suffering of people and how he devoted himself to their service, sometimes even at the cost of his own health.

Once he relieved a patient of high fever, after which he was himself laid up with high fever and cough. Only a day before he had asked Pulin Babu to arrange for a grand *nagara-kirtan* in Calcutta. When Pulin Babu came in the evening he asked him whether he had made all the arrangements. Pulin replied, "All arrangements have been made. Passes have been attained for Biden St., Cornivallis St., Harrison Road, Ganga Bridge and Nimtala St., etc. The six Goswamis, whose names you suggested have been invited. They have been asked to come to Jogen Babu's house at 4 p.m. tomorrow. Other devotees have been asked to assemble at Biden Garden. Flags and *khunties*¹ have also been arranged for. Everything is ready. But we are anxious about your health. I think we should postpone the *kirtan* by two days.

Babaji: No, there is nothing at all to worry. The fever is due to a special reason. It will disappear tomorrow.

Pulin: Another reason for our anxiety is that there is a mosque on the Harrison Road. The Muslims object to any kind of music near the mosque.

Babaji: That is not your responsibility. Nitai Chand will lead the *sankirtan* and He knows what He will do.

The next day at 4 p.m. many people came to Jogen Babu's house. They saw that Baba Mahashaya was still lying on bed. He asked Rama Das to start *kirtan*. Rama Das started *kirtan* and went out and stood at the gate. Everyone thought that since Baba Mahashaya was unwell he would not join the *kirtan*. But after a few minutes he shouted "*Jai Nitai!*" and jumped up. Everyone was thrilled with joy and shouted "*Haribol!*" Baba

¹ Staff with a brass plate bearing some holy symbols attached to it at the top.

Mahashaya asked Phani to bring the *prasadi dor-kaupin* and *bahirvas* of his Gurudeva, which he had sent from Navadvip. Baba Mahashaya wore the *prasadi* clothes, tied a rag round his head, took a staff of peach wood in his hand and was ready for the *kirtan*. He went out and started singing. At first he sang to invoke Nitai-Gaura, then started singing:

“O, Sing, O Sing Hari’s Name;
Sing over and over again.”

The *kirtan* procession started. In front of the procession were the six Goswamis, each wearing yellow colored clothes specially got for them from Vrindavan, and holding *khunties* in their hands. Behind the Goswamis were a number of people carrying flags. Baba Mahashaya and his companions sang and danced behind them. Slowly the procession reached Biden Garden, where a large number of devotees were already waiting for them. As soon as they saw Baba Mahashaya they shouted “*Haribol!*” and joined the procession, singing and dancing. Many *kirtan* parties also began to come from different directions with *khol* and *karatal* and join the *sankirtan*. As the procession marched it swelled more and more in numbers till the roads were altogether blocked for traffic. When the procession reached Harrison Rd., a man came running to Baba Mahashaya and said, “There is a mosque in front. A number of Muslims are also there. They will not allow music before the mosque and may begin to quarrel.” Baba Mahashaya said, “You do your work, Nitai will do His.” So saying he left the *sankirtan* behind, went forward and lay prostrate before the mosque in obeisance. He then began to talk with the chief Mullah of the mosque about Koran and prophet Mohammed, eulogizing their tolerant attitude towards other religions. The Mullah and the Mohammedans present there were surprised

to hear a Hindu *sadhu* quoting Koran. They kept listening to him as if under a spell, while the *kirtan*-procession marched off singing and dancing. No one raised even a finger at the *sankirtan*. After the procession had gone well beyond the mosque Baba Mahashaya came and joined the procession. Before coming away he bowed down again before the mosque and took leave of the Mullah. The Mullah, bowed down to him and made "salaam."

IN NAVADWIP

From Calcutta Baba Mahashaya set out for Kuthighat, Satgachiya and Kalana. After passing a few days in each of these places in *sankirtan* he went to Navadwip. People started coming to him for *darshan* and for removing their doubts and difficulties in religious matters. One day when Karta Babaji, Sri Dharmadas Roy and a number of other people were present, Dharmadas said, "Baba, I have a question."

Babaji: Yes, let me know.

Dharmadas: There are many facets of the Divine *Lila* of Mahaprabhu. Which of His *lilas* is most beneficial and relishable for the devotees, who worship Krishna in *madhura-bhava*?

Babaji: Gauranga-*tattva* is all-inclusive. It includes all the different facets of the Ultimate Reality. Therefore, there is no *bhava* that is not included in Sri Gauranga. But His Radha-*bhava* is the sweetest and the most relishable. The devotees, who seek entrance into the *lila* of Radha-Govinda by assuming *gopi-bhava*, hardly get entrance into the *lila*, if they do not regard Sri Gauranga as Radha. Mahaprabhu did not relish the *bhava* of the people of Navadwip who worshipped Him as *nagar*.¹ Therefore He took *sannyasa* and went to Nilachala,

¹ A hero much appreciated by the ladies.

where He was always immersed in His *Radha-bhava* and relished it deeply in the company of Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Roy.

Karta Babaji: As for me, I feel deeply hurt when you talk of the *sannyasa-lila* of Sri Gauranga. I wonder how it does not hurt you. For me He is always *nagar* par excellence, the *Rasaraja*,¹ Who always revels in *Rasa*. I neither accept nor believe in His *sannyasa*.

Babaji: If you kindly do not take offense, I may say something in this connection.

Karta Babaji: Yes, say by all means.

Babaji: As *Chaitanya Charitamrita* tells us the main purpose of the appearance of Sri Krishna as Sri Gauranga was the fulfilment of His three desires, namely 1) the desire to know the nature and excellence of Radha's love for Himself, 2) the desire to know the nature and excellence of His own sweetness (*madhurya*) as relished by Radha, and 3) the desire to know the nature and excellence of the kind of happiness Radha feels in enjoying His sweetness. But He knew that these desires could not be fulfilled, because He was the *vishaya*² of Radha's love and not its *ashraya*.³ Therefore He adopted the *bhava* and the *kanti* (the golden color) of Radha and appeared as *ashraya* in the form of Sri Gauranga. Sri Krishna did not appear as Gauranga to relish *nagar-bhava*, because He is by nature a *nagar*. It is His natural function to relish different kinds of *rasa* in *nagar-bhava* in His *lila* with the milk-maids of Vraja. If the main purpose of Sri Gauranga be to relish Krishna in the *bhava* of Radha, how can He be happy with our *bhajan*, in some other *bhava*? Sri Gauranga had

¹ *Rasa*-king.

² The person to whom love is directed.

³ The person in whom love originates.

associates and followers, but He loved Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Roy so much, only because they always looked upon Him as Radha and tried by all possible means to support His Radha-*bhava*.

Karta Babaji: Whatever you may say, I cannot explain what happens to me the moment someone talks of the *sannyasa* of Sri Gauranga. I cannot look upon Him as a *sannyasi* with shaven head, wearing orange-colored clothes.

Babaji: That is another matter. Both Nadiya-*lila* and Nilachala-*lila* are eternal. One may adopt for worship the *lila* one loves most. He may also regard that *lila* as the best for him. But he should not say that other *lilas* are inferior or not to be believed. Belief in Gauranga implies belief in all His aspects, all His *lilas*.

Dharmadas: I do not follow how the two *lilas* are eternal. One state of a man gives place to another. When the new state comes, the old disappears. It is only one state that can be eternal. How can two different states exist simultaneously?

Babaji: This is not possible in this world. But the lordliness of the Lord consists in making the impossible possible. All His *lilas*, whenever and wherever performed are eternal. Such is the inconceivable power of His *Lila-shakti Yogamaya*.

RETURN TO PURI

From Navadwip Baba Mahashaya returned to Calcutta. He had stayed only for a few days in Calcutta, when he received a letter from Lalita Dasi, saying that the inhabitants of Puri felt very much distressed on account of his long absence from Puri and were eagerly awaiting his return. He started for Puri the same day. In Calcutta he had an oil-painting of Mahaprabhu, which he carried with him. He reached the Jhanjapita Math in Puri the next morning. Balarama Babu,

Nagen Babu, Bhuvana Babu and other devotees started coming to him. Balarama Babu said, "You will be glad to know that only three days before an Englishman was appointed Manager of the Temple of Jagannath and since then the service of Jagannath has been stream-lined.

Babaji: This is very good news. At last Jagannath Deva has turned the agitating stars away.

Balarama: All that you had said has come true. As instructed by you I had gone to Konark for worshipping the nine stars. As soon as I returned from there, it was heard that the government had proposed the appointment of an English manager for the temple and the approval of the Maharaja was awaited. At first everyone got apprehensive but everyone is now satisfied to see the gentle behaviour and religious attitude of the new manager.

Babaji: I am happy to learn all about the management of the temple and the service of Jagannath. Now go and bring Jagannath's *mahaprasada*. Mahaprabhu has come with me. He has to be offered the *prasada*.

Balarama went and brought the *mahaprasada*. Baba Mahashaya did *dandavat* to the *prasada* and asked a devotee to provide an *asana* to Mahaprabhu in the dining hall and offer Him the *mahaprasada*. Prema Dada was surprised. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "Mahaprabhu is Bhagavan Himself. Narayana and other Gods are His partial manifestations. How can you offer to Him the *prasada* of Jagannath or any other deity?"

Babaji: You have asked a good question. I have told you on several occasions that you must not mix *tattva*, or the ultimate reality as it is in itself, with *lila*. *Tattva* and *lila* are two different aspects of the same thing. As far as the aspect of Bhagavan as *tattva* is concerned He is infinite, omnipresent and perfect in all respects. In this form He is neither conceivable nor worshipable. His *lila* is out of question. His

appearance and disappearance, childhood and adulthood, marriage and *sannyasa*, dance and *kirtan* all are meaningless.

But He is by nature *Rasa* (transcendental bliss) and *Rasika* (enjoyer of bliss). *Rasa* is not possible without *lila*. For the sake of *lila* He hides within Himself His infinitude, perfection, omnipresence and all other qualities that go with His intrinsic Self as the Ultimate Reality or the All Perfect Being and submits to His own *Lila-shakti*, which makes Him dance as it wills as an ordinary human being. Under the spell of *Lila-shakti*, He allows Himself to be tied by mother Yashoda, carries the shoes of Nanda over His head, and His friends Sridama, Sudama, etc., upon His shoulders, and dances to the tune of the *gopis* and enjoys it all. Mahaprabhu is undoubtedly the All Perfect Being, since He is no other than Sri Krishna. But in *lila* He assumes the role of a devotee. He not only worships Jagannath and takes His *prasada*, but goes to the extent of taking the dust of the holy feet of the Vaishnavas and in doing so He realizes a higher kind of happiness than He derives from His own Self as the All Perfect Being. Mahaprabhu as *tattva* is different from Mahaprabhu in *lila*. In *tattva* it is His *aishvarya* (power) that predominates, in *lila* it is His *madhurya* (sweetness) that predominates. If we mix *aishvarya* with *madhurya*, the sweetness of *lila* disappears. *Aishvarya* hurts the sentiments of a devotee, who looks upon the Lord as *Lilamaya* or the Lord as eternally engrossed in *lila* by nature. Yashoda and Shachi can never look upon the Lord from the point of view of *aishvarya*. He is for them always their son and not the All Powerful creator, destroyer and sustainer of the universe.

Prema: But when in Vrindavan Sri Krishna lifted Govardhana or killed Putana, Aghasura, Bakasura, etc., or when in Navadwip Mahaprabhu appeared in His Krishna, Rama and Nrisinha forms before His devotees, did not Yashoda or Shachi witness His *aishvarya*?

Babaji: They did, still it did not in any way affect their *madhurya-bhava*. They did not attribute these acts to Krishna or Gauranga, but to some other *shakti* that had temporarily taken possession of Them. Yashoda saw the entire universe including herself in the mouth of Sri Krishna, yet she thought that it was due to the evil effect of some stars or some other god and took necessary steps to appease them. Krishna still remained her fond child, Who needed her care and protection. The Goswamis have explained that such activities as the killing of Putana were due to the Vishnu part of Krishna and not Krishna Himself. Vishnu killed Putana, using Krishna's organs, Krishna was totally unaware of this. When Putana died and lay on the ground with her devilish form thoroughly exposed, Krishna still played joyfully with her breasts, as if nothing had happened. This only shows that *madhurya* is at its highest in Vraja and Navadwip and *aishvarya* is totally eclipsed by it.

Prema: Do you mean that those who offer *bhoga* directly to Mahaprabhu, without offering it to Jagannath or Krishna, do not commit an offense?

Babaji: Not at all. Mahaprabhu always looks at the *bhava* of a devotee. He reciprocates according to the *bhava* in which a devotee worships Him. When Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu went to the house of Advaitacharya, he laid down three dishes and put *tulasi* leaves on each. But he offered only one to Krishna. The other two he offered to Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu and They accepted them, though Mahaprabhu glorified the dish offered to Him as the *prasada* of Sri Krishna.

In the evening Baba Mahashaya went to Jagannath Temple. People were most agreeably surprised to see that he sang and danced before Jagannath and shed tears of love as he used to do before and inquired about everyone's welfare with his usual concern. Those who felt distressed at the thought that he had

perhaps gone mad and they had lost their only benefactor, their truest friend, philosopher and guide, now felt greatly relieved. His sweet words and tender smiles breathed new hope and new life into their broken hearts.

CHAPTER 28

THE DIVINE GUESTS

It is not only the devotee who seeks the Lord, the Lord also seeks the devotee. One may wonder what makes Him do so. It is always some kind of desire, the desire to fulfil some kind of want or some kind of greed that makes one move and act and seek what he wants. But don't the *shastras* tell us that the Lord has no want, no desire, no other weakness and that He is always self-satisfied and self-fulfilled? The *shastras* do say so. But they also correct themselves by saying that in love the Lord is not above want and greed. In love He has greed and fear and all the other weakness that one can think of. In His love-*lila* greed makes Him steal the butter of the *gopis*, fear makes Him tremble when chastised by Yashoda. Greed, fear, anger, etc., are all vices. But love does not recognize vice. It turns vice into virtue, weakness into sweetness. Krishna would not be so sweet if He did not have these weaknesses. His greatest weakness is His greed for the loving company and service of His devotees. As soon as He gets the fragrance of the flower of love (*prema-bhakti*), blooming in the heart of a devotee, He becomes restless. Then it is not the devotee, who goes to the Lord, but the Lord, Who goes to the devotee, irrespective of the distance between Him and the devotee and irrespective of all the hurdles He may have to cross on the way. The Lord in the form of the Image of Vinoda Bihari (later called Radhavinoda) was

lying buried in a forest in Haridwar, when He got the scent of the flower of *prema-bhakti* blooming in the heart of Babaji Mahashaya and became restless to meet him and enjoy his company. At about the same time, the desire for the company and the loving service of Babaji Mahashaya arose in the minds of Gaura-Nitai, Who were being worshipped by a devotee in Calcutta. This could not remain hidden from Babaji Mahashaya. He started making arrangements for Their service in Jhanjapita Math. One day he called Lakshman Maharana, a carpenter, and asked him to make a beautiful and spacious *sinhasana* (throne) for the deities.

Lakshman said, "I will make. I think a *sinhasana* big enough for Radhakanta will do."

Baba said, "No, four other deities are expected soon. The *sinhasana* should be big enough to accommodate Them along with Sri Radhakanta."

The *sinhasana* was made. After Sri Radhakanta was seated on it, Kishori Dasi said to Baba Mahashaya, "When will those other Thakuras arrive?"

Babaji: They will arrive in ten or twelve days.

Kishori: Where will They come from?

Babaji: Two of Them will come from Haridwar, two from Calcutta.

Kishori: Are all the four images of Radha-Govinda?

Babaji: The two images from Haridwar are Radha-Govinda, the other two from Calcutta are Gaura-Nitai.

One day Baba Mahashaya wrote a letter to Jogen Babu of Calcutta asking him to send as soon as possible a *hukka*¹ with a long pipe and the best type of tobacco that might be available. Lalita Dasi was standing by and reading the letter. She said, "What will you do with the *hukka* and the tobacco?" Baba

¹ Indian hubble-bubble.

replied, "The Thakura, Who is coming from Haridwar smokes *hukka*."

The *hukka* and tobacco soon arrived. The stage was ready for the right royal reception of the royal guests.

THE ARRIVAL OF SRI RADHAVINODA

The guests were already on the move. Vinoda Bihari had asked a Bengali Brahmachari to take Him to Babaji Mahashaya in Puri and had come with Him up to Calcutta. In Calcutta the Brahmachari was told that Babaji Mahashaya did not stay long at one place and was advised to go and inquire about his whereabouts from a newly established Math in Mirjapur St., where some of his disciples were staying, before starting for Puri. He went to the Math. At that time Pulin Babu was there. He introduced himself to him and said, "I have come to seek your help in the fulfilment of a divine mandate. If you kindly permit I shall tell you all about it."

Pulin: Yes, tell me. I shall certainly help you as much as I can.

Brahmachari: One day, when I was lying on a hill in Haridwar in a state of drowsiness, I heard someone saying, "I lie buried under stones on this hill. You take me out from here and serve me." I asked "Who are you? What is your name?" The reply came, "My name is Vinoda Bihari. You take me out. Then I shall tell you everything." I opened my eyes and looked all round, but I did not find anyone there. I felt sure that it was Thakura Himself, Who had spoken to me, but since He did not tell me about the exact spot where He was lying, I did not know what to do. I went about the hill trying to see where He could possibly be. At one place I saw a cluster of trees with a piece of land in the middle. It occurred to me that that might be the spot. But the place could not be reached, because it was

surrounded by bushes all round. It was a difficult task to cut the bushes and make a path. I decided to do it only if the Thakura gave me some indication that He was there. Next day at about 4 a.m. when I was half asleep, I saw a beautiful boy, about ten or eleven years old, sitting on my bed and saying with a gentle smile, "Look, I am at the very spot, where you thought I possibly was. You take Me out as early as possible and serve Me. I am suffering from pangs of hunger without food and water." This brought tears in my eyes. I said, "I shall certainly try. But you see, I am a pauper. I have only four rupees and eight annas with me. Much more money will be required for getting the forest cleared and making a path that would lead up to the spot." The boy said, "You do not worry about that. You only try and everything you need will come of itself." I was happy at the assurance. But when my eyes opened I was shocked and grieved to find that the boy had disappeared. I began to curse my eyes, for if they had remained closed, I would have enjoyed His nectarine beauty and sweet voice, so soothing to the heart, for sometime more.

At day-break I went to the spot and began to think how I should proceed with the difficult task of clearing the forest. A few minutes later I saw two men and three women coming up the hill with two axes. I said, "Where are you going?" One of the men replied, "Baba, we are wood-cutters. We are going to the forest to cut wood."

"What will you do with the wood?"

"This is our profession. We cut wood and sell it in the market.

"If I show you a place and ask you to cut wood from there, will you do so?"

"Why not? We want wood. It does not matter where we get it from."

I was happy to hear this. I showed them the spot and

said, "You will have first to make a path leading to the spot by cutting the bushes." At this the ladies said, "Baba, this is green wood. If we cut it, it will not sell, and we shall have to go without food today." I said, "All right, I shall give you some money for today." They agreed and started cutting. In the evening I gave them four *annas* each. They were happy. They said, "Tomorrow we shall clear the entire jungle." The next day they came with seven or eight other people and completed the work. I went inside the jungle and saw that there was a clean spot about ten square feet in size, and about two and a half feet higher than the rest of the ground. I thought that that must be the spot, which Vinoda Bihari had indicated. I asked the wood-cutters to dig it. They said, "Today we have only axes with us. Tomorrow we shall bring spades and dig." I agreed. They went, but I remained there for the night and slept on one side of the raised ground. At four o'clock in the morning I heard the same sweet voice saying, "I am under the very spot you have located. You have to dig only a little just in the middle and you will see Me." That day when the labourers came, I asked them to dig slowly. After they had dug only a foot and a half a part of the image could be seen. They dug about two feet more very carefully. Two beautiful images of Radha and Krishna came out. I brought Them home and started serving Them. One night I heard Vinoda Bihari saying to me in a dream, "Take Me to Sridham Puri." I was shocked. I thought perhaps Vinoda Bihari was not pleased with my service, perhaps I had committed some offense on account of which He wanted to leave me and go to Puri. But if I took Him to Puri I did not know where and in whose care I should leave Him. These thoughts constantly worried me. The benign Lord again spoke to me one night and said, "You need not worry. I am pleased with your service. But I am eager to go to the Jhanjapita Math in Puri and enjoy the

company and loving service of Radharamana Charan Das. Take Me to him soon."

So, I have come to you. Now kindly advise how I should proceed.

Everyone in the Math was excited to hear the story. Pulin Babu said to the Brahmachari, "You kindly stay here in the Math with the deities for three or four days. In the meantime I shall write to Babaji Mahashaya and arrange to send you to him."

Pulin Babu wrote to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya was happy to receive the letter. In reply he said, "Convey my *dandavat-pranam* to Brahmachariji and send him here along with the deities as early as possible."

Soon after Brahmachariji arrived in Jhanjapita Math with the deities. The deities were bathed and duly installed in the temple and named Sri Radhavinoda. The Brahmachari told Baba Mahashaya the whole story regarding the discovery of Vinoda Bihari and His insistence on being brought to the Math so that They could enjoy his loving service. At the end he said that Vinoda Bihari was accustomed to smoking *hukka*. As he said this he brought out the *hukka*, which the Thakura used to smoke and some tobacco. But Vinoda Bihari was served tobacco in the new *hukka* that was sent from Calcutta. The pipe of the *hukka* was placed in His hand and the door of the temple was closed. After sometime, when the door was opened, it was found that the temple was filled with the smoke and the sweet aroma of the tobacco. This happened day after day and the people came to the temple to see this *lila* of Radhavinoda.

THE ARRIVAL OF NITAI-GAURA

One morning Babaji Mahashaya called Lalita Dasi and said, "Today Sri Radhakanta Deva's two other guests will

arrive. Make the best possible arrangement for Their *bhoga*. Prepare *puri*,¹ *payas*,² *sandesh*,³ and all the other dainties you can. Also prepare some breakfast to be served to Them as soon as They arrive and keep two garlands ready." He said this and began to move up and down the courtyard eagerly awaiting the arrival of the distinguished guests. Lalita Dasi and the other Ashramites wondered at his anxiety and eagerness for proper reception and entertainment of the guests, because many dignitaries often visited the Math and he never expressed such anxiety for them. They guessed that Gaura-Nitai, Whose arrival he had prophesied were coming.

At 9:30 a.m. Haridas Dada, a disciple of Babaji Mahashaya arrived with two beautiful images of Nitai-Gaura and his family. The images were not big in size but they were very attractive. Their smiling faces easily won the hearts of people. As soon as Babaji Mahashaya saw them he ran forward and clasped them. He went dancing to the temple and installed them on either side of the *sinhasana*. He asked Kishori Dasi to serve breakfast to them. Then as he came out of the temple Haridas Dada made obeisance at his feet and began to weep. Baba Mahashaya said, "Why have you come with the deities and the family?"

Haridas: After you came away from Calcutta, I felt very unhappy without your company. I have now come here for good. I shall not go back. I offer myself, my family, my deities and everything I have to you. You do with us what you like.

Baba Mahashaya: Have you taken the consent of your mother and wife?

Haridas: I had decided to come alone. But when they

¹ A sort of bread fried in *ghee*.

² A food prepared with milk, rice and sugar.

³ A sort of sweetmeat made of milk.

insisted on coming with me I told them that I would not come back, I would surrender myself completely at your feet and live the life of complete renouncement. They said they would do the same. So I have brought them.

Baba Mahashaya smiled a little. He arranged for the stay of the ladies in a house near the Math. Haridas lived permanently in the Math. Now Radhakanta Deva was the host, Radhavinoda and Nitai-Gauranga lived with Him as His Guests.

One day Haridas said to Baba Mahashaya, "Kindly give me *bhek* (Vaishnava *sannyasa*). I can no more remain without *bhek*." As he said this he fell at Baba Mahashaya's feet and began to weep.

Baba Mahashaya embraced him and said, "If you really want to take *bhek*, it is necessary that you cut off all worldly ties. If there is anything that keeps you attached to the world, you must renounce it."

Haridas: I have no attachments with the world. I have a house in Calcutta. If I sell it I am free.

Babaji: Then you should sell it before you take *bhek*.

Haridas went to Calcutta, sold the house and returned to Puri after seven days. As he put the money he got for the sale of the house before Baba Mahashaya, Baba said with surprise, "You sold the house for this small amount!"

Haridas: By your grace I found a customer soon after reaching Calcutta and sold the house to him for whatever he agreed to give.

Baba Mahashaya was overwhelmed with emotion. He was impressed by the manner in which Haridas was making sacrifice after sacrifice at the altar of *bhakti*. He said, "Why have you brought this money here. You should have given it to your mother."

Haridas: Now I do not have anything that I can call mine.

All that was mine I have offered to you. Kindly do not entice me again by *Maya*.

Haridas was given *bhek*.

Once the *sakhis* in the Ashram staged the *Vasakasajja*,¹ *Khandita*,² *Man*³ and *Kalahantarita*⁴ *lilas* of Radharani. Haridas was asked to sing. Haridas sang verses relating to the *lilas*. Kishori Dasi dressed Radhakanta and Sri Radha and made Them behave according to the *bhava* of the verses inside the temple, while others sang and danced dramatizing the *bhava* of the verses outside. Everyone was inspired. It appeared as if the eternal *lila* of Radha-Krishna had itself appeared on the scene. The whole night passed in *Vasakasajja-kirtan*. No one had any outward consciousness. As soon as Haridas sang the verse in which Radharani says with a broken heart, "Sakhi, now give up the hope of Krishna's arrival, for the night is over and day has dawned," they became aware of the dawn. Suddenly the scene changed. *Vasakasajja-kirtan* gave place to *Khandita-kirtan*. *Khandita-kirtan* was followed by *Man-kirtan* relating to Krishna's arrival, Radharani's *Man* (resentment) on His late arrival, Krishna's apologies and cajolement and His failure to win Her. As the *Man-kirtan* began, the door of the temple was opened. Radharani was seen sitting and the *sakhis* standing with their back against Krishna and Krishna standing at a distance behind them, downcast and disheartened. The *kirtan* went on. Radharani reprimanded Krishna and turned Him

¹ Sri Radha decorates Herself and Her *kunja* in expectation of Her lover, Who has promised to come and impatiently awaits His arrival.

² Sri Radha is broken-hearted because Her lover, Who had promised to come has not come.

³ Separation in resentment.

⁴ Sri Radha is in penitential mood, because She has turned away Her lover in resentment.

away. Then followed the *Kalahantarita-kirtan* expressing Radha's remorse for turning Krishna away and Her resolve to commit suicide in separation from Him. At this stage the consciousness dawned upon the *sakhis* that it was eleven o'clock and *bhoga* had to be prepared for Radhakanta. Therefore *kirtan* was most unwillingly stopped. Everyone changed his dress except the *sakhis*, but Haridas did not. He only wept, when someone asked him to change. He began to look for Baba Mahashaya. But Baba had gone to Radharamana Kunja to rest. He went there and fell at his feet and wept and wept. Baba Mahashaya said, "Haridas, why do you weep?" Haridas could not reply. He wept all the more. A new wave of love had begun to surge in his heart resulting in an upheaval that had arrested thought and speech. Baba Mahashaya understood what had happened to him. But he smiled and cautioned him by saying, "It is all well and good if the *bhava* is genuine. But if it is aped the consequences are disastrous. If by the grace of the Lord a particular *bhava* develops in the heart of a devotee, he should try to make it permanent. It is not so easy to do so. The mind must be kept strictly under control. It must not be allowed to entertain any other kind of *bhava*."

Haridas: Prabhu, I need not tell you what my condition is. You know my heart. It is impossible for me to change this dress. The moment I think of changing, my heart begins to sink. Tell me what I should do.

Babaji: *Bhava* and *vesh* (guise) should not be adopted on someone's advice. They are the gifts of the Lord. You must do as inspired by Him.

Haridas: I know that the *bhava* I have got is no one's gift except you. I could never even imagine that this could happen to me. You kindly tell me how I should preserve what you have given.

Babaji: The essence of *raganuga* or *bhavanuga-bhakti* is

anugatya, that is walking on the footsteps and under the guidance of those, who are the ideals of your *bhava*. *Bhakti* means submission and obedience. Any kind of independence is detrimental to it.

Haridas: Kindly tell me how I should behave towards persons other than those, who have *sakhi-bhava*.

Babaji: You should have the conceit of an ordinary householder milkmaid and regard everyone as superior to you. You must not dine or sleep or sit alone with a man, who has the conceit of being a male. Also you must not sit alone with a female. You must not keep the company of persons, whose *bhava* is opposed to yours and you must not have any contact with your kinsfolk.

Haridas went back to Jhanjapita Math. When Baba Mahashaya went there Lalita Dasi asked, "What is the name of this new *sakhi*?"

Babaji: You decide what name should be given to her, considering her *bhava* and disposition.

Lalita Dasi: We do not know. You give her the name you think best.

Babaji: From her *kirtan* and behaviour yesterday it appears that she is an adept in the function of a *duti* (female messenger). She should, therefore, be named Vrinda Dasi.

Lalita Dasi: Vrinda¹ is the name of a goddess. Give her a suitable name so that she remains in our group.

Babaji: You want to keep a *sakhi* in your group irrespective of her *bhava* and disposition? Remember that when you enter the *nitya-lila* (eternal *lila*) Lalita Devi herself will decide the group of *sakhis* in which you should be included and the service that should be assigned to you according to your ability and natural disposition.

¹ Vrinda Devi is the goddess presiding over Vrindavan. Her main function is to bring about union between Radha and Krishna.

CHAPTER 29

JOURNEY TO VRINDAVAN

Once while Babaji Mahashaya was doing *kirtan* before a large crowd in Puri, he suddenly started taking leave of everyone for proceeding to Vrindavan. The people of Puri were shocked. They fell at his feet and began to weep and request him to postpone his visit to Vrindavan. He had to give in. But after sometime he started for Vrindavan with his party after assuring everyone that he would return soon. He left in the Ashram only the *sakhis* and three or four people to assist them in the service of the deities.

A MONTH IN SIURHI

On his way to Vrindavan he stopped at a number of places. The first stoppage was in Calcutta, where he stayed with Kamakhya Das Babaji in Barahanagar. After a couple of days he started for Siurhi. In Siurhi he stayed with Sri Rakhal Das Chaudhari, the landlord of Siurhi. The landlord celebrated his visit by inviting Pandit Rama Das Babaji of Navadwip to deliver discourses on *Sanatana-siksha* (Mahaprabhu's teachings to Sanatana Goswami as described in *Chaitanya Charitamrita*) for a month. Baba Mahashaya started attending the discourses.

One day when the Pandit was commenting upon the

importance of the Name of the Lord, he said certain things which implied the superiority of karma (action) over the Name. Baba Mahashaya could not tolerate this. He quietly left the place. After that he never attended the discourses, though every day, after the discourse, he came to do *kirtan*. For three or four days the pandit continued to speak of the superiority of karma over the Name. Many among the audience, who did not like this, went to Baba Mahashaya and complained. Baba Mahashaya appeased them by saying, "You see, there are all sorts of people among the audience. Perhaps the pandit says so to satisfy a particular section."

One day Baba Mahashaya was sitting alone in a room. Suddenly he sent for Rama Das, Radhavinoda, Phani and a number of others and asked them to repeat aloud the *mahamantra*:

*"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare,"*

and himself sat down in the middle to count the *mantra* on beads. The *kirtan* began. After sometime it was noticed that water began to exude from the walls and the ceiling like sweat. *Kirtan* became louder and louder. Many people gathered on the scene. Everyone was surprised to see water oozing out from every corner of the room. They began to say to one another, "We have heard *kirtan* of the Name so many times. But we never saw this kind of phenomenon. Who can say whether this is due to the *shakti* of the Name or the *mahapurusha* sitting in the centre and counting on beads?" In due course one hundred thousand repetitions were completed and the *kirtan* ended. When Rakhal Babu asked Baba Mahashaya about the strange phenomenon, he said, "You see, the power of the Name is unlimited. The Name is more potent than Bhagavan

Himself. It can easily do what Bhagavan cannot. Hanuman easily reached Lanka by jumping over the sea with the help of the Name of Rama, but Rama Himself had to build a bridge to cross the sea."

Rakhal: We have done the *kirtan* of the Name so many times, but this never happened before.

Babaji: Name is free to act as it pleases. It manifests its *aishvarya* (power) only when it desires to instill faith into the hearts of people, who are faithless.

Rakhal: I believe that the proximity of a *mahapurusha* has also something to do with it. A bright thing becomes brighter when it comes in contact with a bright container.

Babaji: This kind of discussion is futile. We should only have firm faith in the power of the Name.

One day Baba Mahashaya was taking a stroll in the open with some of his disciples. The magistrate of Siurhi, riding a horse passed by his side. Phani said, "Look at the audacity of the *Sahib*.¹ He passed by Baba Mahashaya riding a horse." Baba Mahashaya became angry with Phani. He rebuked him by saying, "You have committed an offense against a *Rajapurusha*.² Bhagavan Himself has said, '*naranancha naradhipah*—amongst the human beings I am the king.' The magistrate is the representative of the king and the king the representative of Bhagavan. Offense against the magistrate is offense against Bhagavan. Go and make obeisance to him and apologize." Phani went and lay prostrate before him. The magistrate pulled the reins of the horse and asked a man standing-by what the matter was. The man told him about Baba Mahashaya's reprimand to Phani. Immediately the magistrate turned back and took his hat off to salute Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya saluted him in return.

¹ Term of respect often used for the Englishmen.

² A representative of the king or the government.

After a few days Baba Mahashaya started *ashtaprahar-kirtan*. Since the beginning of the *kirtan* he lost outward consciousness. With great difficulty he could be made to eat a little. His eyes were red and full of tears. If he talked his talk was broken and seemed to indicate that he was talking of a different world. The whole day and night passed in this state. In the morning, when *kirtan* came to an end, a disciple said, "Shall we go out for *nagar-kirtan*?¹ It is seven o'clock." Baba Mahashaya said with a start, "Oh, yes! Let us go."

The *nagara-kirtan* started. The sky-rending sound of the *kirtan* attracted large crowds. The streets were packed to the pin-point. Boys and girls headed the *sankirtan* singing and dancing. Women folk returning to their homes with pitchers of water over their head stood aside watching the scene with tears in their eyes. Other ladies watched the scene from house-tops. A wave of joyful animation thrilled every street through which the *kirtan* passed. After a long time the *kirtan*-party returned to the house of Rakhal Babu and the *kirtan* ended with the customary ceremony of breaking the earthen-pot containing curd and turmeric. Baba Mahashaya rolled over the ground, smeared with curd and turmeric in a state of entrancement. In that state he touched the head of everyone, who made obeisance to him, with his foot and said something, which could not be understood. Suddenly Pandit Rama Das came forward and making obeisance to him, caught hold of his feet and said, "Baba, I have committed grave offense at your feet. For a number of days I have been feeling penitent. Kindly forgive me."

Baba Mahashaya said in a voice filled with emotion, "You have by your explanation of the teachings of Mahaprabhu to Sanatana Goswami filled the hearts of people with despair and disappointment. Sanatana Goswami alone was

¹ It was customary for Baba Mahashaya to go out for *nagara-kirtan* after the *ashtaprahar-kirtan*.

worthy of the teachings given to him by Mahaprabhu. It is not easy for others to follow them. The *jivas* in this age of Kali are short-lived and imbecile. The mercy of the Lord is their only hope and sheet-anchor. Therefore Mahaprabhu has in His most merciful and easiest dispensation for the *jivas* asked them to take shelter of *Harinama* and chant it wherever, whenever and in whichever capacity they can. He did not lay down the condition of external or internal purity or any other condition for its chanting. This creates hope in the hearts of the otherwise hopeless and dispirited people. But pandits like you shatter their hope by clouding their vision and laying down strict conditions regarding character and procedure for chanting, which are difficult to follow. They can never be at peace. They can become learned and know everything about religious practice (*sadhana*), but they will always remain ignorant of *kripa* (mercy). The only means by which *kripa* can be known or realized is *kripa*. It cannot be attained through any kind of *sadhana*. It is absolutely independent. It cannot be brought under any rule or regulation. The pandits sometimes do not understand the real meaning of the *shastras* and propound a principle based on their own understanding as the highest, which is wrong. When they say something on the basis of their understanding, they should say that this is how they understand the *shastras* or how the guru immanent in their heart has made them understand. Others on the basis of their understanding or *bhajan* may explain it differently."

The pandit wept and said, "I am grateful to you for your kind advice. I am blest."

IN DUMKA

For several days Baba Mahashaya's disciple Bhagavata

Misra had been requesting him to go to Dumka, a place about 40 miles from Siurhi. He had desired that Baba Mahashaya should go in a horse-driven carriage and others in a bullock-cart. When he expressed this to Baba Mahashaya, he said, "Look Bhagavata, this is the place where our Nitai Chand has travelled. It is not proper to go on conveyance on a path through which He has gone. We shall all go on foot." So saying he started for Dumka on foot with his companions at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and reached the Maurheshvara Shiva Temple in the village Maurheshvara at 8 p.m. On seeing Lord Shiva he said, "Oh! This is the Shiva-linga worshipped by our Nitai Chand!" and became unconscious. After half an hour he regained consciousness and prayed to Shiva. The next morning he started again and going through a jungle singing and dancing reached a village at 11 a.m. He asked someone, "What is the name of this village?" He replied "Ranishvara." Baba Mahashaya smiled and said, "Oh! *Rani* is Radharani, *Ishvara* is Krishna. Radha-Krishna live here in this village, that is why it is called Ranishvara. We must stay here today." So he stayed in the village in a cow-shed, which was cleaned by his companions. He asked his companions to go out for *bhiksha*. They went singing, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*"

The village was dominated by Shaiva Brahmins. They were angry to hear this *kirtan* and began to make carping remarks on them. One of them said, "You do not get any service. That is why you go about begging from door to door." Another said ironically, "And poor boys, they are so delicate that they also cannot earn their livelihood by working as coolies." But they went singing all round the village, without minding what they said. They received only half kilo of rice in *bhiksha*. When they returned they said to Baba Mahashaya,

“What sort of village is this? *Bhiksha* is out of question, what we get in place of *bhiksha* is only abuses.”

Babaji: You are beggar *vairagis*. You should be content with whatever you get.

Companion: If they only abuse us, we wouldn't mind. But they pass critical and captious remarks against Nitai-Gaura.

Babaji: Don't worry. Nitai Chand is gamesome. Perhaps He wants to play a game here. You go and have your bath and do your *puja* (worship). Let Nitai Chand do what He wills.

They went to take their bath in the river. Baba Mahashaya remained sitting quietly. After half an hour a man came with ten kilos of rice and pulses, vegetables, oil and other necessary items in the same proportion and said with folded hands, “Baba, kindly accept this *bhiksha*. Cook and offer *bhoga* to Mahaprabhu.”

Baba Mahashaya was overwhelmed with *bhava*. He said with tears in his eyes, “Aha! How merciful is Nitai!” He asked with astonishment, “How did you come to know that we have Mahaprabhu with us?”

The man replied, “Baba, there is a mystery behind it. I saw some Babajis going through the village singing and dancing. I began to think if I came to know where they were staying I could go and have their *darshan*. Just then a tall Brahmin, whom I never saw in this village, came I know not from where and said, as if in answer to a question I had asked him about them, ‘They are staying in a cow-shed on the river bank. They are about twenty-five persons and they also have Mahaprabhu with them. They have nothing to eat.’ He said this and disappeared. I could neither recognize him nor ask him who he was. In haste I collected these things and came here.”

While they were talking another man came with two servants and brought 40 kilos of rice and pulses, *ghee*, vegetables, spices, earthen pots for cooking and fuel and said to

to Baba Mahashaya, "Baba, kindly accept these things and bless me."

Baba said with eyes swimming in tears, "Baba, there is no question of my acceptance or non-acceptance. I am only watching the *lila* of Nitai Chand."

By this time the companions returned. They were surprised to see the pile of provisions in the cow-shed. Baba Mahashaya said, "Now take these things to the Kali-*barhi* (the Temple of Kali) you see over there. Cook and offer *bhoga* to Mahaprabhu." In due course the *bhoga* was offered and Rama Das sang the *bhoga-arati-kirtan* in a loud and heart melting tone, which attracted a large number of people. After the *kirtan* was over, the Brahmins, who had showered abuses, came to Baba Mahashaya and apologized for what they had said with folded hands and heads cast downwards with shame. Baba Mahashaya said, "You are all Brahmins and therefore our guru. You should not even think of having said or done anything for which you need to apologize. Now come and have *mahaprasada*."

Some twenty Brahmins sat down with Baba Mahashaya to take *mahaprasada*. Others started serving. In all about one hundred people dined. They began to talk among themselves regarding the *shakti* of Baba Mahashaya and said, "We never saw a *mahapurusha* like him, who would neither take offense nor find fault with others. They requested him to stay on in the village for a few days. But he pleaded inability with folded hands and assured them that he would come again if Nitai Chand so willed. He started onwards the next morning singing and dancing and reached Dumka at 9 a.m.

A report regarding the happenings in Dumka during Baba Mahashaya's stay there by Sri Kishori Mohana Singh, who was then superintendent of Dumka Distillery, was published in *Charit Suddha*, the original biography of Baba

Mahashaya in Bengali, in 1919. We reproduce the same in his own words as follows:

"Eighteen years ago Sriyuta Radharamana Charan Das Babaji Maharaja came on foot from Siurhi to Dumka, singing and dancing with his disciples. I was at that time the superintendent of Dumka distillery and Mr. Bompash, an Englishman, was the magistrate of Dumka. Yatin Babu was the deputy magistrate. Three or four years before Yatin Babu, Jogen Babu and some others had founded a *Hari Sabha*,¹ where we gathered in the evening. Baba Mahashaya came at 5 o'clock in the evening and, passing through the city and the area in which the magistrate lived, came directly to the *Hari Sabha*. He asked Rama Das to start *kirtan*. Rama Das started singing. The *kirtan* was so sweet and inspiring, so thrilling and heart-melting that everyone wept in ecstasy. Babaji Mahashaya began to dance in a state of trance and, holding the chin or Rama Das began to say something, which no one could understand. In the same state he became unconscious and fell on the ground. After sometime his body began to tremble so vigorously that it appeared as if the whole room was trembling. His teeth also trembled so fast that we apprehended they would fall. The hairs of the whole body stood erect. Slowly the condition changed. It looked that half of his body was trembling, half was steady; one eye was closed, the other open; from one side of the face he appeared to laugh, from the other to weep. There was no end to our surprise. Some of us began to say, 'We never saw or heard of such *sattvika-bhavas* appearing on the body of a man. It is said that many such *bhavas* appeared on the body of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, which we did not believe. But now our doubt is gone.'

"I went near Baba Mahashaya and touched his body. I was surprised to see that it had become hard like steel.

¹ Place for religious gatherings.

It was sweating profusely. Sweat and tears were flowing like a stream. We were greatly worried about this. Some of us ran to bring a fan and some water. But Prema Das Baba said, 'Do not worry. He will be alright soon. Only continue *kirtan*. We continued to perform loud *kirtan* round him till 11 p.m., when life returned into our heart to see that he was as normal as before.

"The news regarding the arrival of Baba Mahashaya spread all over Dumka. The next morning the tribals of the place, called Santals, came to him singing *kirtan* songs in their own language and dancing in a state of frenzy. He made obeisance to the *kirtan* by lying down prostrate before it. They also prostrated before him. They continued the *kirtan* for a long time and departed after it was time for Baba Mahashaya to bathe and attend to morning service.

"In the evening on the insistence of a number of people Baba Mahashaya went out on *nagara-kirtan*. Many people, including the Santals joined the *kirtan*. The magistrate saw the frenzied *kirtan* of the Santals and got somewhat apprehensive. He followed the *kirtan* on horse-back till the end. All the time he had his eyes fixed on Baba Mahashaya and watched him singing and dancing in ecstasy. But he was concerned all along about the Santals, who seemed to be running amuck. The next day he said to Yatin Babu, 'A *sadhu* is staying at your place. Who is he and why has he come?'

Yatin: He is a great saint. He goes about from place to place singing the Name of the Lord. We have brought him here from Siurhi.

Magistrate: How many people live with him?

Yatin: Just now there are twenty-five or twenty-six people with him.

Magistrate: Since he has come the Santals are frenzied. I am afraid they may go out of control.

Yatin: He only sings the Name of God and talks about Him. He is not interested in anything else.

Magistrate: I want to see him.

"Yatin Babu took him to Baba Mahashaya. He asked him to wait outside and went in to inform Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya came out to receive him. They saluted each other. Baba Mahashaya took him in. The magistrate looked at Baba Mahashaya attentively from top to bottom. After sometime he said, 'How long will you stay here?'"

Babaji: I have not come here of my own. Someone else has brought me. He knows how long He would keep me here.

Magistrate: He did not tell you how long you have to stay here?

Babaji: He does not tell anyone what He wills. But He does what He wills.

Magistrate: Where does He live?

Babaji: Everywhere.

Magistrate: If He is everywhere, why can't we see Him?

Babaji: No one can see Him, if He does not want to be seen. He is the master of His will. When He wills that someone should see Him, He appears before him.

Magistrate: I understand. Now tell me whether He is personal or impersonal according to your scriptures.

Babaji: He is both personal and impersonal.

Magistrate: How can He be both?

Babaji: That is why our scriptures say that he is all-powerful and perfect. We cannot say that He is only this and not that. To say so is to limit Him and make Him imperfect. He is this, that, and everything. Everything is His partial manifestation.

Magistrate: What do you think about our Christ?

Babaji: Christ was an incarnation of God.

Magistrate: I do not know what you mean by incarnation.

Babaji: The Lord has said that whenever and wherever, religion, morality and truth are threatened, I appear on earth in a partially manifested form to uphold them and to punish the wicked. Therefore it cannot be said when and where and in what form He would appear. He appears in whichever form and whichever country He chooses to appear. If we accept one form and do not accept the other, we commit an offense.

"The magistrate was pleased to hear the non-sectarian and all-reconciling views of Baba Mahashaya. He began to love and hold him in high esteem.

"After a few days Baba Mahashaya started *ashtaprahar-kirtan*. Many Santals also joined it. When I went to join the *kirtan* at 10 o'clock I saw that Baba Mahashaya was engaged in a mad dance and dancing he held tightly one person after another and, whispering something into his ear, so spiritualized him that tears, tremor, horripilation and the other *sattvika-bhavas* began to appear on his body. When he saw me he held me close to his heart and danced for sometime. Then suddenly he uttered in my ear the *mantra* my guru had given me. As soon as he did this a strange *shakti* penetrated my body like an electric current and I began to dance in ecstasy. Later I was told by my clerk, Sri Ramanimohana Ghosh, that he had embraced him and whispered his *ishta*¹ *mantra* into his ear. Similarly, I came to know from others that he embraced each one of the persons present, who was already initiated, irrespective of the fact whether he was initiated into Shakta, Shaiva or Vaishnava Sampradayas, and whispered into his ear the *mantra* given by his guru. Everyone was surprised.

"The next day Baba Mahashaya called Yatin Babu and Jogen Babu and said, 'This evening we shall take out *nagara-kirtan*.' This caused anxiety, because Mr. Bompash had made it

¹ The God one worships.

a strict rule that there would be no noise anywhere in the city after 9 p.m. Baba said, 'Don't worry. We shall return before 9 p.m. You make sure that the *kirtan* starts at 4 p.m.'

"The *kirtan* started at 4 p.m. The crowd following the *kirtan* was unprecedented. Therefore Mr. Bompash was himself heading the *sankirtan* on horse-back. At every crossing Baba Mahashaya stopped for a while and sang verses relating to the *lila* of Nitai-Gauranga. The wave of emotion generated by the song drew in men, women and children from all sides. Everyone seemed to be in ecstasy. Mr. Bompash also enjoyed the songs, because he understood Bengali.

"At 8 p.m. Baba Mahashaya became unconscious. All of us became anxious. Since nothing else could be done five or six of us began to carry him on our shoulders. Mr. Bompash got down from the horse and coming close to Baba Mahashaya began to watch him with astonishment. While the procession thus moved slowly the high toned *kirtan* of Rama Das and the shouts of "*Haribol!*" rent the sky. Everyone including Mr. Bompash lost consciousness of time. It was 12 p.m. when the *sankirtan* party returned and *kirtan* concluded.

"The next day at night-fall Baba Mahashaya expressed the desire to go to Vaidyanath. Yatin Babu, Jogen Babu and others requested him to stay in Dumka for a few days more. But he could not accede. When Mr. Bompash came to know this he arranged for a tum-tum and three bullock-carts. Vaidyanath was 46 miles from Dumka. He also arranged for his stay in three dak-bungalows on the way."

IN KASHI (VARANASI)

Baba Mahashaya did not stay long in Vaidyanath. He proceeded to Kashi and reached there with his companions on the *Vijaidashmi*¹ day. They stayed in a place near the bank

of the Ganga. After bathing in the Ganga they went to the Temple of Vishvanath for *darshan*. Baba Mahashaya saw that the floor of the temple was studded with rupee coins. He said to his companions, "I will not go inside the temple. You can go if you want."

"Why will you not go?" asked one of the companions.

“You see, those rupee coins on the floor bear the image of empress Victoria. Walking over them would be an insult to the empress and an offense against goddess Laksmi.”

Baba Mahashaya was, however, taken inside the temple by one of his companions in his lap. After making obeisance to Lord Shiva, Baba started *kirtan*, which lasted for three hours. Large crowds, including the *pandas*, joined the *kirtan*. After *kirtan* Baba Mahashaya was again brought out of the temple in someone's lap. He went back to the place, where they were staying. Everyone took *mahaprasada*, which some of the companions, who were left behind, had kept ready, and rested for a while.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Baba Mahashaya said to his companions, "Today is *Vijaidashmi*.¹ Let us go on *nagara-kirtan*." They got ready with *khol* and *karatal*. Baba Mahashaya started singing extempore:

"O you, citizen of Kashi, come and see
with your eyes,
How Gauranga with hands raised high, tears
in eyes, dances and cries
And says to Gopeshvara, 'O kind and merciful Shiva
have mercy on me,
Give me my Krishna, the soul of my soul
heart of my heart, I pray to thee."

Thus singing and dancing through the streets of Kashi and enrapturing men, women and children with his songs and outbursts of *bhava* and *bhakti*, they had never experienced before, he reached Dashashvamedha Ghat at 8 p.m. There, for two hours, he danced and sang:

“*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura, Radhe-Shyama,
Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama,
Gauri-Shankar Sita-Rama.*”

A large crowd gathered at the *ghat*. All were entranced and sang and danced with him. The shouts of “*Haribol!*” and “*Jai Nityananda Rama!*” rent the sky. At ten o’clock they stopped *kirtan* and returned to their place.

Next morning Baba Mahashaya went to Manikarnika Ghat to bathe. There were many people at the *ghat*. As soon as they saw him, they said, “Baba, we have been looking for you. Where are you staying? We would like to go to your place.” He brought them to his place. After a long conversation a devotee asked, “Baba, how long will you stay here?”

Babaji: Baba, Nitai Chand has brought me. He knows how long he would keep me here.

Devotee: Where do you want to go from here?

Babaji: I am only a doll in His hands. I do not have any desire of my own. I do not know where He will take me and for what purpose.

Devotee: Who bears the expenses of your journey?

Babaji: Nitai Chand.

Devotee: True, but there must be some medium.

Babaji: I am a *jiva*. My understanding is limited. How can I know when and where He will take me and through whom? He made someone a medium, who brought me here. He has also brought here some of His devotees, who beg

and arrange for His *bhoga*. Who will be the next medium and where He will send me through him, I neither know nor need to know.

At this time came Kamakhya Das Babaji from Calcutta and made obeisance to Babaji Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya said, "How do you come here?"

Kamakhya: I have been drawn by your grace. Yesterday Jogen Babu of Darjiparha came to me and said, "Babaji Mahashaya is at present in Kashi with his party. You kindly go and give this money to him for going to Vrindavan and convey my *dandavat-pranam* to him. He said so and gave me two hundred rupees to be given to you.

Babaji: How could Jogen know that I am here?

Kamakhya: You know that best.

Baba Mahashaya's eyes reddened and tears began to flow. He said in a voice choked with emotion, "Oh! How graceful is Nitai Chand! He takes so much care of an insignificant creature like me, even though I do not do His *bhajan*. If I did His *bhajan*, I do not know how much more He would do for me." As he said this he wept like a child. The visitors were surprised. They began to say to one another, "God takes care of the man, who has firm faith in Him. Why should He not take care of a *siddha-mahapurusha* like him. We never saw a man who has so much faith in God."

Baba Mahashaya decided to leave for Vrindavan the same evening. Many people of Kashi went to see him off at the station. Before boarding the train he bade farewell and wished Nitai's best blessings to them all.

The train reached Hathras Station. Baba Mahashaya and his companions got down. They stayed in a resthouse and began to make arrangements for Mahaprabhu's *bhoga*. At that time Shachinandana Das Baba, a disciple of Siddha Jagadish

Das Baba, arrived from Vrindavan. Baba Mahashaya asked, "How do you come here?"

Shachinandana: I was going to Navadwip. I do not know what drew me here. On arriving here I saw you and there was no end to my happiness. I had long desired to meet you and for this purpose I had decided to go from Navadwip to Puri. Have you informed anyone in Vrindavan regarding your visit?

Babaji: I did not consider it necessary.

Shachinandana Das Babaji sent a telegram to Nityasvarupa Brahmachari. He had six kilos of *perha*¹ with him, which he placed before Baba Mahashaya.

Babaji: What shall I do with this?

Shachinandana: Offer them to Mahaprabhu and distribute the *prasada* to everyone.

Babaji: Very well. Mahaprabhu has come from a long distance. He must be hungry. He asked Prema Das to offer the *perhas* to Mahaprabhu and himself distributed the *prasada*.

On receiving the telegram Nityasvarupa Brahmachari, Ganesh Babu and Govinda Dada began to make arrangements for Baba Mahashaya's stay and *bhoga*, etc. Soon the news of Baba Mahashaya's expected arrival in Vrindavan reached everywhere in Vrindavan. Sri Ramahari Das Babaji Mahashaya, Sri Madhava Das Babaji Mahashaya, Nityasvarupa Brahmachari, Ganesh Bhattacharya, Atal Dada, Govinda Dada and a number of other persons reached Vrindavan Station to receive him.

The moment Baba Mahashaya boarded the train for Vrindavan he was overwhelmed with *bhava*. He sat speechless. His eyes reddened. Tears incessantly flowed from his eyes. Every moment his body trembled and hair stood on end. The companions started *kirtan*.

¹ A sweet made from milk and sugar.

IN VRINDAVAN

As soon as the train reached the bridge near Mathura Station, Shachinandana Das Babasaïd, "Baba, we have reached Mathura." Baba Mahashaya threw his arms round his neck and began to weep like a child. When the train reached Vrindavan, the sound of *kirtan* drew the crowd waiting to receive Babaji Mahashaya near his compartment. The companions began to get down. But Baba Mahashaya remained sitting, drawn completely within himself. Atal Das Babaji shouted, "*This is Vrindavan!*" Baba Mahashaya sprang up. He jumped out of the train and began to roll on the ground in deep love and excitement. Who could control him? His body was smeared with dust and the tears of his eyes. After sometime, when he came to his own, he saw the crowd of people all round. He made obeisance to them and they made obeisance to him. Nityasvarupa introduced to him each one of the persons who had come to receive him. Introducing Ramahari Das Babaji he said, "He is our spiritual uncle, disciple of Siddha Jagannath Das Babaji." Baba Mahashaya lay prostrate before him in obeisance. He said, extending his arms to embrace him, "Come my golden moon. I have found a jewel in you. Night has set in. Let us go to the Temple of Gangaji, where we have made arrangements for your stay."

He went and stayed there with his companions. Nityasvarupa Brahmachari and Govinda Das began to make necessary arrangements for *bhoga*. But Govinda Das resentfully kept away from Baba Mahashaya. His resentment, however, was not ordinary. It was resentment in love (*pranaya-abhimana*). For Baba Mahashaya had for no obvious reason, though in his own interest, asked him to leave his company and go and live in Vrindavan, several years back. Nityasvarupa forcibly took him to Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya understood the

cause of his resentment. He embraced him and said, pretending affectionately to rebuke him, "O Govinda! How could you forsake me and live here so long? How hard-hearted you are! Now, give me the refreshments you have. I am hungry." Govinda Das said ironically, "Yes, I know how affectionate and loving you are." He went hurriedly and brought *sharabat* and refreshments, which he took along with Ramahari Das Babaji and others.

During Baba Mahashaya's stay in Vrindavan, Ramahari Das Babaji, Madhava Das Babaji and some other saints hardly lived in their *bhajan-kutis*.¹ They lived mostly with Babaji Mahashaya. Gangaji's Temple was near Yamuna. Baba Mahashaya often went and sat on Bhramar Ghat. The sight of women going with pitchers full of Yamuna water on their head reminded him of Radharani and Her *sakhis*. The beauty and loveliness of the bowers and creepers on the bank of Yamuna, the cries of peacocks and the humming of the black-bees all combined to send him into a trance in which he enjoyed the beauty and charm of transcendental Vrindavan. In this state he remained totally confined within himself and the saints of Vraja, who craved his company, remained disappointed. It was probably for this reason that he was shifted from Ganga Temple to Karhli Kunj, near the Madanamohana Temple.

The inhabitants of Vrindavan, young and old, began to come to him, attracted by his *kirtan*, extraordinary *bhava* and unparalleled simple, sweet and loving behaviour. An old man once asked him, "Baba, what is the easiest way of attaining Radha-Govinda?"

Babaji: For the *jivas* of Kali there is no way except the *kripa* of Radha-Govinda.

Old man: By what means can we attain *kripa*?

¹ Place for performing *bhajan*.

Babaji: The only means for attaining *kripa* is *kripa*. Krishna is eternally dominated and controlled by *kripa*. He does whatever *kripa* makes Him do. He goes and blesses the *jiva* to whom *kripa* takes Him, like a doll pulled by a string, without for a moment judging him by his caste or creed, learning or ignorance, virtue or vice and *bhajan* or anything else. Putana wanted to kill Him by making Him suck her breast smeared with poison, yet *kripa* impelled Him to bless her in a manner in which He would bless His foster-mother.

Old man: If *kripa* is causeless and indiscriminate it should flow towards the virtuous and the vicious alike. Krishna should be as merciful towards all demonic women as he was towards Putana.

Babaji: True, but one should at least have a longing or *lobha* (greed) for *kripa*. A physician wants to give medicine to a patient out of mercy, but if he knows that the patient does not feel any need for it and is likely to throw it away, will he give? Though Putana did not have any longing for Krishna-*kripa*, she had intensely longed for His death. Longing for Krishna even if it be in an adverse form automatically attracts His *kripa*.

Old man: I follow that one should have *lobha* or intense longing for *kripa* in order to attain *kripa*. But how to get the *lobha*?

Babaji: Man is by nature *lobhi* (greedy). He is unhappy because he has, out of ignorance, made the things of this world the object of his *lobha*. He has only to divert his *lobha* towards Krishna and His *kripa*.

Old man: But is that not a difficult thing to do? The worldly objects are within our reach. We see them and feel attracted. But we do not feel so attracted by Krishna. It is difficult to develop *lobha* for a thing, which does not attract.

Babaji: Attraction for Krishna and His *kripa* can be developed if one has the grace of a *mahapurusha*, who has himself been blessed by Krishna-*kripa*. Company of such persons by

itself generates attraction for Krishna.

Old man: So, it means that the *kripa* of a *mahapurusha*, who has realized Krishna, is the main *sadhana* for the attainment of Krishna-*kripa*?

Babaji: Yes, *Chaitanya Charitamrita* says that, "without *mahat-kripa* (the *kripa* of the great ones) nothing is possible. Krishna-*kripa* is a far cry, even freedom from bondage is not possible. (Cc. 2.22.32)"

As soon as Baba said this the old man fell at his feet and began to weep and say, "Baba, you will have to bestow *kripa* upon this foolish creature, who has so far been labouring under the illusion that Krishna can be attained by *sadhana*. Today my pride of *sadhana* is gone and I understand that *kripa* is the only means for attaining Krishna. *Kripa* in the beginning and *kripa* in the end, *kripa* is the only sheet-anchor of man desiring freedom from bondage or the attainment of the lotus-feet of Krishna." Baba Mahashaya lifted him and blessed him by his loving embrace and sweet words.

MEETING WITH JAGADISH DAS BABAJI

Siddha Jagadish Das Baba, a disciple of Siddha Bhagavan Das Baba, lived in Kalidah, at a short distance from Karhli Kunj, where Baba Mahashaya was staying. As soon as he came to know of the arrival of Babaji Mahashaya in Karhli Kunj, he came to him for his *darshan*. Baba Mahashaya was at that time sitting in the first floor. On being told that Jagadish Das Baba had come, he hurriedly came down, lay prostrate before him in obeisance and took him to the upper story. Jagadish Das Baba was the spiritual uncle of Babaji Mahashaya. Therefore he had parental affection for him. He said affectionately, "I was happy to know a few days back that you had arrived in Vrindavan. But I could not go to see you, because

I am an old man and it is not possible for me to go into the city. Now when you have come so near, I could not remain without seeing you. I hope you are well."

Babaji said with folded hands, "By your grace I am quite well and happy. Why did you take the trouble of coming here? I would have myself gone to you. But I understand, your affection for your child forced you to come."

Jagadish Das Baba said, "You are our beloved child. Nitai-Gaura have bestowed upon you the highest treasure cherished by Them, the treasure of Krishna-prema. You are our sun of glory. We feel gloried on account of you. I pray to the Lord that you may rise from glory to glory by pulling the *jivas* of Kali out of the mire of pseudo-Vaishnavism and sham religious faiths and practices that doom their destruction and setting them on the path of pure devotion preached by Mahaprabhu and practised by the Goswamis."

This was followed by talks on Krishna-lila, which lasted for two hours. Then Jagadish Das Baba wanted to go, because it was time for *madhukari*. Baba Mahashaya said, "Baba, it is my request that as long as I am here you kindly take *mahaprasada* with us. If you permit I can arrange to send it to your *kuti*." Jagadish Das Baba said, "I do not accept anyone's invitation. But I shall dine with you some day." Jagadish Das Baba went back to his *kuti*. After this, sometimes Baba Mahashaya went to Jagadish Das Baba and sometimes Jagadish Das Baba came to him. They met and talked of Radha-Krishna *lila* everyday.

MEETING WITH SWAMI KESHAVANANDA

One day Swami Keshavananda came to see Baba Mahashaya. Baba Mahashaya and Keshavananda had known and loved each other like brothers for sometime. Baba Mahashaya called him Dada. He said, "Dada, I did not know

that you were here, otherwise I would have gone to you."

Swamiji: I had heard about your arrival. But since I was busy I could not come to you. Do not take my offense. I have built an Ashram in Radha Bagh and have been busy in connection with the same.

Babaji: Is the work completed?

Swamiji: Yes, tomorrow we have the inauguration ceremony. You will have to go with your party. I have come to invite you.

Babaji: Invitation is not necessary, because the Ashram is our own.

Swamiji: No, no invitation. You are right. I have come only to inform you that tomorrow we shall have *kirtan* and inauguration.

When Swamiji had gone Atal Das said to Baba Mahashaya, "You have accepted Swamiji's invitation. But he is a *jnani*. The *jnanis* do not believe in Thakura and do not offer *bhoga* to Him. How can we eat there?

Babaji: You need not bother about that. You do not know Keshavananda. He is a great devotee and has firm faith in Mahaprabhu. You should not judge a man by his external form. What is important is the *bhava*, which you cannot easily know. Many *mahatmas* put on a false appearance in order to avoid publicity and fame. You will see how tomorrow our Mahaprabhu will preside over the function there and *bhoga* will be duly offered to Him.

The next day Baba Mahashaya reached Radha Bagh singing and dancing with his companions at 10 a.m. As soon as Swamiji heard the sound of *kirtan* he came out of the Ashram with his disciples and made obeisance to the *kirtan*. Inside the Ashram there was an altar prepared for *homa*. Baba Mahashaya asked his companions to place the picture of Mahaprabhu they had brought with them on the altar.

Mahaprabhu having duly taken His seat the companions of Baba Mahashaya together with the disciples of Swamiji performed *kirtan* vehemently for two hours.

After *kirtan* Swamiji said, "Now that *sarvayajneswar* (the presiding deity of all the *yajnas*¹) Sriman Mahaprabhu Himself has graced the *yajna*-altar, no separate *yajna* is needed." Baba Mahashaya began to dance with joy and dancing embraced Swamiji. Both interlocked in each other's arms danced and laughed and wept together in love. Horripilation, tremor and other *sattvika-bhavas* appeared on the bodies of both. The disciples of both had thought that their *upasana*² and *bhava* were different. But who could now say that they were different.

After sometime both sat down and started talking on various topics relating to Krishna and His *lila*. They talked and shed tears of love while their disciples and companions listened to their ambrosial talks and felt blest. While the talks were going on a disciple of Swamiji came and said, "The *bhoga* is ready." Swamiji consulted Baba Mahashaya and said, "Offer the *bhoga* to Mahaprabhu." The *bhoga* was offered to Mahaprabhu. After *bhoga-arati-kirtan* everybody took *mahaprasada* and rested for a while. Baba Mahashaya and his companions returned to their place in the evening.

TALKS AND REJOICINGS IN RADHAKUNDA

One day Sri Kamini Kumara Ghosh, the manager of Rajarshi Banamali Raibahadur³ came to Baba Mahashaya and said, "I have come to invite you on behalf of Sriyuta Banamali Babu to his house in Radhakunda on the occasion of *Gopashtami*, when his Thakura, Vinoda and Vinodini (Krishna and Radha)

¹ A fire oblation or religious offering.

² Mode of worship.

³ The big landlord of Tarash, who had the title of 'Raja,' but was called 'Rajarshi' because he was intensely religious like a *rishi*.

will go into the forest to celebrate *Gopashtami*. Baba Mahashaya said, "I will be too happy to go and have the *darshan* of Radhakunda, Shyamakunda, Vinoda-Vinodini and Their devotee Rajarshi Banamali Babu."

The next day Baba Mahashaya started for Radhakunda with his companions. When Banamali Babu was informed that Baba Mahashaya had reached Manasi Ganga,¹ he went forward with Haricharan Das Babaji, Rasika Das Babaji, Vishnu Das Babaji, Nityananda Das Babaji and a number of other *ma-hatmas* to receive them in a garden, half way between Kusum-sarovara and Radhakunda. From the garden he brought them to Radhakunda and, after they had made obeisance to Radhakunda and Shyamakunda, to the Temple of Vinoda and Vinodini in his house. Baba Mahashaya kept looking at Their beautiful faces for sometime and then started singing songs in Their praise. Tears flowed from his eyes and *sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body. After sometime he controlled his *bhava* and at the insistence of Banamali Babu sat down to take *shital-bhoga*² with others. Baba Mahashaya first put a morsel of the *shital-bhoga* into the mouth of Haricharan Das Babaji. Haricharan Das Babaji put a morsel from his *pattal* into the mouth of Baba Mahashaya. In this way Baba Mahashaya fed a morsel to everyone and everyone fed a morsel to him. Everyone was overwhelmed with a feeling of joy mixed with love, he had never experienced before. Baba Mahashaya was by nature ever so joyful and mirthful, so loving and lovable that by his every single act, he seemed to disseminate joy and love and win the hearts of people he met.

Rajarshi Banamali Raibahadur had arranged for the stay of Baba Mahashaya and his companions in the Madanamohana

¹ A lake about 4 miles from Radhakunda.

² Refreshment that has a cooling effect in summer.

Temple and for their *mahaprasada* at his own place. So, they went and stayed in Madanamohana Temple. The next morning Baba Mahashaya asked his companions to bathe in the Radhakunda three times every day and also to circumambulate Radhakunda and Shyamakunda and prostrate before the *kuti* of each *mahatma* living on the bank of the *kunda*.¹

At about 7:30 a.m. Rajarshi came and said, "Today is Gopashtami. Vinoda-Vinodini will go to the garden between Radhakunda and Kusum-sarovara to celebrate the occasion. I have come to request you kindly to accompany Them."

Baba Mahashaya was happy to hear this. After sometime he reached Rajarshi's Rajbarhi (palace), where Ramahari Das Babaji, Madhava Das Babaji, Haricharan Das Babaji, Rasika Das Babaji and others were waiting for him. As soon as he reached there they stood up and took him and his companions to a room adjoining the Temple of Vinodaji. Since all of them did *lila-smarana*,² they started talking about the *lila*. They requested Baba Mahashaya to say something about *lila*. Baba Mahashaya said, "Baba, what can I say about *lila*? Let me see if by your blessings *Yogamaya* Devi inspires some *lila* in my heart." As he said this he was overwhelmed with *bhava* and, as if possessed by *Yogamaya*, began to narrate an amorous *lila* of Radha-Krishna slowly in a manner, which showed that he actually saw the *lila* as he described it. Tears flowed from his eyes and *sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body. Everybody heard like one bound by a spell. Everyone lost outward consciousness and seemed to enjoy the *lila* as he had never enjoyed it before. As the talk was going on someone came and said, "Bhoga has

¹ A lake or pond.

² A form of *sadhana* in which the *sadhaka* devotes himself exclusively to meditation on the divine *lila* of Radha-Krishna as performed during the 24 hours every day.

been offered. *Mahaprasada* is ready." Rajarshi said, "Baba, we have to go for *mahaprasada*." Baba Mahashaya clapped happily and said, "I am ready. I love *mahaprasada* as I do not love anything else. It is on account of my love and *lobha* for *mahaprasada* that I live in Puri and call Jagannath Deva 'Baba' (father). It is the same *lobha* that has brought me here. Let us go. I go ahead." Ramahari Das Babaji said, "Baba, I am your uncle. My *lobha* is greater. I must go ahead of you."

After they had taken *mahaprasada* and rested for a while. Vinoda and Vinodini were taken out in a palanquin, beautifully decorated with flowers. As they proceeded towards the garden Baba Mahashaya and his companions sang and danced before Them. The people looked at the beautiful and smiling faces of Vinoda and Vinodini and heard the heart-melting and maddening *kirtan* of Baba Mahashaya and felt like floating in the ocean of bliss. In due course the procession reached the garden. Vinoda and Vinodini were seated on the *sinhasana* placed on an altar. The Vrajavasis had already assembled there in a large number. The cowherds had also arrived with their cows, which were beautifully decorated, and had started grazing them in the nearby field. The *rasadhari*s¹ were enacting *lila*, thus adding additional charm to the scene. The celebration lasted till evening, when Vinoda and Vinodini returned to the temple, with Baba Mahashaya and his companions again singing and dancing as before.

One night Baba Mahashaya and the other *mahatmas* were all taking *mahaprasada* together and talks on different topics relating to *sadhana* were going on. Baba Mahashaya said, "Most merciful Mahaprabhu has in this *yuga* bestowed Krishna-*prema* upon everyone without discriminating between *jiva* and *jiva*. No one has been left out. The only thing is that some have

¹ Performers of Krishna-*lila* on stage.

realized it and some have not. Those who have not realized will realize, when the time comes. If Mahaprabhu did not distribute Krishna-*prema* indiscriminately His work would have remained incomplete. This was not possible. This is amply testified by Rupa Goswami through his '*anarpit*' *sloka*."¹

Kamini Babu: I do not see any sign of *prema* in me. If I had received *prema* it would not have been possible for me to remain engrossed in worldly affairs with my wife and children.

Babaji: Kamini Babu, I am sure you have *prema* and your wife and children too. Just think, you are the servant of a Raja and are living with your wife and children. Still you desire and hope to be the *dasi*² of Radharani and render loving service to Her. Whose grace is this? Who has implanted this desire in your heart? You wanted money, wife and children. The benign Prabhu gave you these things and sent you to Vrindavan. Could you come with your wife and children and live here in Vrindavan without His grace? No one is more merciful than Mahaprabhu. He goes from door to door and gives away Krishna-*prema*, the most valuable treasure of His heart, to whomsoever He comes across, without considering whether He is worthy of it or not.

At this Sri Rasika Das Babaji said, "You may say so. Mahaprabhu might have distributed Krishna-*prema* to all and sundry irrespective of their worthiness or unworthiness, but I remain completely neglected. I have not received even an iota of it."

Baba Mahashaya felt very much aggrieved. He said in a voice choked with emotion, "Baba! In this age of Kali Mahaprabhu has given Krishna-*prema* to even the most sinful

¹ In this *sloka* Sri Rupa Goswami emphasizes that Mahaprabhu appeared in this age of Kali to mercifully bestow upon the *jivas* what had never been bestowed before. The reference is to the *upasana* of *manjari-bhava*.

² Female servant.

and hypocritical persons. How could he leave you? If He did, would it not have brought a blot upon His name as the All-merciful Lord? I can say with *mahaprasada* in my hand that you have most certainly received Krishna-*prema*." As soon as Baba Mahashaya said this, tears began to flow from the eyes of Rasika Das Baba and the other *sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body. Baba Mahashaya said, "Now tell me whether by the mercy of the Merciful Lord you have received *prema* or not?"

"I have received," said Rasika Das Baba.

Baba Mahashaya felt satisfied. He could not tolerate anyone saying that he was neglected by Mahaprabhu. One of the devotees said, "You see, the Goswamis practised so much *vairagya* (asceticism) and did so much *bhajan*. Haridas Thakura chanted three lacs of *Harinama* everyday. But we are not able to do anything. I do not know what is going to happen to us."

Babaji: We are the *jivas* of Kali. We are so weak and imbecile that we can neither bear heat nor cold, nor remain hungry even for a short while. How can we practise so much *vairagya* and so much *bhajan*. They knew our limitation. Therefore they have done *bhajan* for us, not to set an example for us to follow, but to reflect or meditate upon. Our *bhajan* is to read the books in which their *vairagya* and *bhajan* are described, to talk about and to reflect on their *sadhana* and attainment. In fact their *sadhana* is for us both means and end. The *sadhakas* enjoy reflecting upon and talking about the manner in which the *nitya-siddha* (eternally free) *parikaras* (associates) of the Lord eternally enjoy the beauty, attributes and the *lila* of the Lord and keep themselves engaged in His loving service. This by itself is the highest End, or the object to be attained by a *sadhaka*. The person, to whom this truth comes home, does not waste time in anything else. He becomes free from all other duties and obligations. If a man's heart is thrilled by the mercy of Mahaprabhu, Who gives us *prema* without looking into our

offense against *mung*-pulse by saying that pea-pulse would have been more welcome." This was a simple assertion and was made in a jocular manner, but it conveyed a lesson—the lesson that we cannot be at peace unless we learn to be satisfied with whatever is given to us by providence.

One day when Babaji Mahashaya, Sri Ramahari Das Babaji, Sri Madhava Das Babaji and other *mahatmas* were sitting on the bank of the *kunda* and were engaged in talks on various subjects relating to *lila*, Rasika Das Babaji said, "I have a question, which has been bothering me for sometime. Radharani went through several stages in separation from Krishna, which included *unmad* (dementedness), *moha* (unconsciousness) and even *mrityu* (death).¹ These states are mentioned in the *shastras* and I have also heard about them from saints. But I never heard that Radharani or any of the *gopis* ever had the same state as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, as for example, the disjoining of the joints and the lengthening of the body or shrinking of the limbs and the body becoming like a tortoise. Since Sri Krishna appeared as Mahaprabhu by adopting the *bhava* and *kanti* (luster) of Radharani, the question is why Mahaprabhu was subjected to states and *bhavas*, which Radharani never experienced?

Babaji: The answer is simple. In Vrindavan-*lila-rasa* Radharani is the *ashraya*, that is, the person who loves or relishes the object of love. Krishna is the *vishaya* or the person loved and relished. In Navadwip-*lila-rasa* Sri Krishna is both *ashraya* and *vishaya* or the relisher and the relished, because He assumes the *bhava* and *kanti* of Radha to relish His own beauty as relished by Radha and to relish Her *prema*. But although

¹ *Mrityu* here does not signify death in the sense of separation from body, but the state prior to death.

Krishna assumes the *bhava* of Radha, He does not possess the heart of Radha, the tabernacle in which alone Her *madanakhya*¹ *mahabhava* can be contained. Therefore the *bhava* spills out in the shape of the unprecedented *sattvika-bhavas* experienced by Him. *Bhava* or *prema* resides in the heart. The *sattvika-bhavas* are its outward manifestations. The more the impetus of *prema* is controlled and retained in the heart, the greater is its *madhurya* (sweetness). Sri Krishna in the form of Mahaprabhu could not retain the *bhava* of Radha in His heart on account of its intensity. In *prema-lila* Krishna always suffers defeat at the hands of Radha. This is exemplified by an interesting episode. Once, for the sake of fun, the sportive Krishna hid Himself from the *gopis*. The *gopis* began to search Him. When He was about to be discovered he assumed the form of four-armed Vishnu. The *gopis* could not recognize Him. They bowed down to Him thinking that He was Vishnu, and walked away after praying to Him that their devotion to Krishna might remain constant. But when Radha came and Krishna saw Her from a distance, it became impossible for Him to retain the four-armed *aishvarya* form. The *shakti* of Radha's *prema* compelled Him to manifest His sweet two-armed form with the flute in His hand and the peacock feather over his head as His crown.

Rasika: You said that in *Navadwip-lila* Krishna is both *vishaya* and *ashraya*, relisher and relished. But it is obvious that when Krishna assumed the *bhava-kanti* of Radha and appeared as Gauranga He did not remain Krishna.

Babaji: Krishna assumed the *bhava-kanti* of Radha, that is, He covered His blue *kanti* with the golden *kanti* of Radha. The blue *kanti* did not disappear. It only remained covered by the golden *kanti*. It was like dipping a *murti* made of brass in

¹ *Madanakhya-mahabhava* is the highest *bhava*, which is the characteristic of Radha alone.

melted gold. The *murti* only looks golden from outside, but remains brass inside. Similarly after assuming the *bhava-kanti* of Radha, Krishna looked Gauranga from outside but remained Krishna inside.

Rasika: This means that those who worship or meditate upon Gauranga with Krishna-*mantra* are right.

Babaji: No, there is great difference between *tattva*¹ and *lila*. *Tattva* is not perceptible. It has neither name, nor form, nor attributes. Therefore it is not possible to meditate upon it. Meditation of an object in *lila* having name, form etc., alone is possible. Though Krishna and Gauranga are the same in *tattva*, They are different in *lila*. In *lila* if you call 'Gaura!' Gaura alone will reply, not Krishna. If you do not accept difference between Krishna and Gauranga in *lila*, the *madhurya* (sweetness) of *lila* disappears.

One day Sripad Raghunandana Goswami came from Vrindavan and said to Baba Mahashaya angrily, "I understand that you extol *kripa* to the skies and undermine *sadhana* and preach accordingly. I have come to protest against this. *Kripa* is not a fruit that falls from the tree. It cannot be obtained without *sadhana*.

Baba Mahashaya made obeisance to him and gave him *asana* to sit. After Sripad had cooled down a little, he said with folded hands, "If you kindly permit, I may say something in this connection."

Sripad: Yes, I would listen.

Babaji: I submit that if *kripa* can be attained by *sadhana*, it is not *kripa*. If it is incumbent on the Lord to give us what we want according to our *sadhana*, how can we call Him *Kripamaya* (merciful)? We can call Him *Kripamaya* only if he shows mercy

¹ Metaphysical principle or reality as it is.

upon those, who do not have any succour or support from anywhere and who are so weak that they cannot do any *sadhana* and *bhajan*. We *jivas* of Kali are so much under the clutches of *Maya* that it is almost impossible for us to do any *sadhana* without *kripa*. Our minds are unsteady. We are always running after the material objects and seeking the fleeting pleasures of life. It is difficult for us to withdraw our mind from them and think of or meditate upon the Lord. I do not undermine *sadhana*. *Sadhana* is necessary, but it is neither possible nor fruitful without *kripa*. You say *sadhana* first then *kripa*, I say first *kripa*, then *sadhana*. *Kripa* always precedes *sadhana*. Those who believe in *jnana*, *karma*, or *yoga* may to some extent succeed in attaining something by *sadhana*, but the *upasana* of *Vraja-bhava* is not possible without *kripa*, because in this kind of *upasana-anugatya*, which means guidance or dependence on the guru and all those who are superior, is necessary and *anugatya* implies *kripa*. *Sadhana* is necessary both for the *sadhaka* and the *siddha*. But in each state *anugatya* is necessary.

Sripad: Do you mean to say that the example of *sadhana* and *bhajan*, the Six Goswamis and the other associates of Mahaprabhu have set before us, is of no importance whatsoever?

Babaji: The Goswamis renounced the world and lived under trees, sometimes under one tree, sometimes under another, sometimes getting food to eat, sometimes going without it, sometimes sleeping and sometimes keeping awake throughout the night and doing *bhajan*. It is difficult for us to follow them. Their *bhajan* is the object of our meditation. They have out of mercy for us, the *jivas* of Kali, set up an ideal of *sadhana-bhajan* before us so that, if we cannot follow it, we may attain the goal of *bhakti-sadhana* only by meditating upon it. We should, however, follow in their footsteps as much as we can, depending all the time and with all our heart and soul

upon their *kripa*, without which all our efforts will be futile. Sripad went back satisfied.

One day Madhava Das Babaji said to Baba Mahashaya jestingly, "I have heard that you have delivered many fallen souls from bondage and bestowed *prema* upon them in Bengal and Orissa. This time we have caught you. We shall not leave you until you deliver us as well."

Baba Mahashaya said laughingly, "I would be glad to deliver and be known as the deliverer of the fallen, if I found any fallen souls in Vrindavan. But where to find one? I see that everyone here is not only free from the bondage of *Maya*, but a *dasi* of Radharani."

Madhava: Why? Don't you know that we are fallen?

Babaji: No, Vrindavan is transcendental. There can be no phenomenal or fallen creature in Vrindavan. You are all the *dasis* of Radharani, the love-queen of Vrindavan and Vrajavasis, the eternal denizens of the eternal Vrindavan. You should kindly admit me as a denizen of Vrindavan and make me a Vrajavasi too. I cannot get entrance here without your *kripa*. The jest turned into a serious discussion when Rasika Das Babaji said, "We see that even the most skeptical, characterless and hypocritical people only purchase a railway ticket and come and live here and become Vrajavasis. Would you call these people Radha-*dasis*?"

Babaji: The *shastras* say that in Vrindavan, the birds and animals, the trees and creepers are all transcendental, the ground is made of *Chintamani*,¹ the trees are *Kalpatarus*² and the six seasons are always present. They also say that we cannot see Vrindavan in its real shape with our material eyes. By material

¹ A fabulous gem said to grant the possessor whatever he may wish for.

² A tree which yields to everyone's desires.

eyes is meant the eyes of those, who are not engaged in *upasana*.¹ The vision of the *upasaka*² is different from that of the *anupasaka*.³ Similarly, what the *shastras* say about the *lila* of Vrindavan is for the *upasakas* and not for the *anupasakas*. Those who are the *upasakas* of *gopi-bhava* regard Krishna as *purusha* and all others in Vrindavan as *gopis*. The *upasaka*, who does not firmly believe in this, does not succeed in his *upasana*.

We may turn back for a while to describe an event that took place when Baba Mahashaya was going to Radhakunda on foot, performing *kirtan*. At Kusum-sarovara he separated for a while from his party and went to a secluded place, behind the Temple of Dauji, where a *mahatma* named Shyama Das lived in an old turret, and practised *bhajan* in hiding. No one knew about him and Baba Mahashaya also had never met him. He went there and, like one who had been intimate with him, held his hand and said, "Shyama Das, you are hiding here. You are my younger brother and I have been looking for you. Come along." He went with him and joined the *kirtan*. Shyama Das wondered how Baba Mahashaya was his elder brother. Perhaps, he thought he had some distant relationship with him, which he had forgotten, and began to feel small and guilty on account of it. But he could not say anything and followed him like one under a spell.

Now once again Baba Mahashaya felt attracted by this *mahatma*. He took Ramahari Das and some other *mahatmas* with him and went to the turret near Kusum-sarovara, in which he lived. He said to him, "*Mahatma*! I am very hungry, give me something to eat." Shyama Das was at a fix. He had nothing,

¹ *Sadhana* or practice of spiritual discipline.

² Those doing *upasana*.

³ Those not doing *upasana*.

which he could offer them to eat. Baba Mahashaya said, "Why are you worried? I know you have some dried pieces of bread. Why not bring them? Shyama Das was so busy with his *bhajan* that he did not have to go for *madhukari* everyday. He went for *madhukari* only once or twice in a week and ate dried bread on other days. As soon as he brought out the dried pieces of bread, the *mahatmas* fell upon them like children and began to push and pull each other to grab them. There was great fun and amusement. The *mahatmas* are usually as deep and calm as the sea, but also as frolicsome as children.

After sometime Shyama Das Baba said to Baba Mahashaya, "We had never met or known each other before you came to me the other day. How then did you call me by name?"

Babaji: Baba, do we know each other only now? We have been tied to each other with the bond of brotherly affection since long. It is love that ties us all together and ties us eternally. That is why we do not want *mukti*.¹

One morning Baba Mahashaya circumambulated Radhakunda and Shyamakunda and went to the *kuti* of Haricharan Das Babaji and shouted, "*Mahatma!*" Haricharan Baba recognized his voice. He came out hurriedly and took him in. They talked for a long time about Mahaprabhu's *kripa*, Radha-Krishna *lila*, Raghunath Das Goswami's *vairagya* and subjects relating to *sadhana*. While talking about *sadhana* Baba Mahashaya said, "I am happy to see the way in which you are engaged in *sadhana*. Your Radhakunda-*vasa*,² *madhukuri-vritti*³ and *vairagya* are admirable. But I was not pleased to see your behaviour one day."

¹ Deliverance from the bondage of *Maya*, without the loving service of the Lord.

² Living in Radhakunda.

³ Adopting *madhukari* as means of livelihood.

Haricharan Das Baba said with a start, "What was that? Kindly let me know so that I may correct myself."

Babaji: That day you went to Rajarshi's house for *madhukari*. You took one *dona*¹ *dal*² and one *dona* vegetables. I was unhappy to see this, because it was against the rules of *madhukari*. *Madhukari* means taking *bhiksha* from a number of places like *madhukar* (bee). The bee gathers nectar from new flowers everyday and satisfies its hunger by taking nectar in a very small quantity. Similarly, the *sadhu*, who lives on *madhukari*, should take *bhiksha* from different houses in a quantity which is just enough for his sustenance. Besides there are a number of places from which *madhukari* is forbidden by the *shastras*. They are *Rajagriha* (the house of a Raja), the house of a prostitute, market place, the house of a money-lender, the house of the Brahmin who begs, the house of a traitor and the house of a person to whom the *sadhu* is very well known. Rajarshi is a Raja and you are very well known to him and respected by him. That is why as soon as the servant saw you, he rushed and brought two *donas* of *dal*, vegetables and a number of other things for you. Does he give *bhiksha* in the same quantity and in the same manner to every other Vaishnava, who goes there for *bhiksha*? Perhaps not.

After saying so, Baba Mahashaya held the hand of Haricharan Das Babaji and said in affectionate tone, "Baba, don't take it ill. The slightest error committed by a pandit and *mahatma* like you becomes an example for others to follow. You need not worry about your food and other needs. Quietly sit down in your *kuti* and do *bhajan*. Whatever you need Prabhu will send to you. Hasn't He said, "I take care of the person who worships Me with single-minded devotion

¹ A container made of leaves.

² Soup of split pulse.

and carry to him on My own head all that he needs.”¹

Haricharan Das said with tears in his eyes, “Dada, bless me so that my conduct may be above blemish.”

One day Baba Mahashaya and the other *mahatmas* were taking Vinoda’s *prasada* in the Temple of Vinodaji. Shyama Das was standing at a distance. Baba Mahashaya said, “Shyama Das, come and sit here. Why are you standing apart?” Shyama Das said, “Baba, I have itch all over my body. So I avoid sitting with others.”

“Oh, that is nothing!” said Baba Mahashaya, pulling him to sit by his side.

Rajarshi Babu said, “Shyama Das, you defy us everyday. It is well that today you have fallen into powerful hands.”

Baba Mahashaya said with a smile, “The thing is that you are all the *upasakas* of *madhura-rasa*. You have the conceit of being the *dasis* of Radharani. He is an *upasaka* of *sakhya-rasa* and has the conceit of being a *purusha* (male). How can he mix with you? He can mix with me.”

Madhava Das Baba said with a smile, “This means that you are also an *upasaka* of *sakhya-bhava*. Henceforth we shall not mix with you.”

Baba Mahashaya said, “Leave me aside. I am in all the *rasas*.”

Rasika Das Baba said, “If you are in all the *rasas* how can you have *rasa-nishtha* (exclusive faith in one *rasa*), which is essential?”

Baba Mahashaya smiled and said, “*Nishtha* or no *nishtha*. I am a servant of Nityananda. I have to be in the same *rasa* in which Nityananda is. Nityananda serves Mahaprabhu on different occasions in different *rasas* appropriate to the

¹ *Bhagavad-gita* 9.22

occasion. So, He is both *das* and *dasi*, *sakha* and *sakhi*." Then he began to sing the famous verse of Vrindavan Das Thakura: "*Nagar*¹ Nitai, *Nagari*² Nitai etc.," which means that Nitai is the *seva-vigraha*³ and therefore He serves Mahaprabhu in all the various capacities involving all the different *rasas*.

RETURN TO PURI

Baba Mahashaya thus lived in Radhakunda for a number of days, enjoying the company of *mahatmas*, ecstasizing them through his *kirtans*, and teaching them by whatever he did or said. Even his jokes and repartees had a lesson to teach. One day, while he was taking *mahaprasada* along with others in the Temple of Vinodaji, he suddenly began to take leave of them for going to Puri. All were stunned. They said, "Baba, we never thought you would cruelly deprive us of your company so soon." Rajarshi Banamali Babu said, "Baba, I am bound to obey all your commands, but not this one. I will not let you go so soon."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Baba, I do not know why it is my habit not to stay at any place for long. But why do you worry? It is not *Maya* that joins us together but love. Love-relationship is eternal. I do not know how many times we shall meet again."

Baba Mahashaya left for Vrindavan and after staying there for a couple of days bade good-bye to the people, the birds and animals and the trees and creepers of Vrindavan.

¹ A young man to whom ladies feel attracted.

² A young woman to whom men are attracted.

³ *Seva*, or service personified.

INSTALLATION OF ANANTA-DEVA¹

On reaching Puri Baba Mahashaya started going to the Jagannath Temple early in the morning with his companions doing *kirtan*. But one day instead of going to the temple he went alone to the sea. He returned with a black stick, spirally curved, and sat in the verandah of the temple in the Math. His eyes were red and wet with tears. He sat silent and grave. No one had the courage to ask him anything. After half an hour he called Lalita Dasi and said, pointing to the stick, "Look, keep this Ananta Deva carefully. I shall tell you all about Him later." Lalita Dasi kept the stick inside the temple.

The next morning he again went to the sea with the stick. Phani was with him. On reaching Chakratirtha he placed the stick on his right shoulder, turned towards the south and looking upwards with folded hands uttered some prayers for fifteen minutes, then flung the stick with force into the sea. Surprisingly, after sometime the stick returned to the shore, where Baba Mahashaya was standing. Phani said, "Baba, I never saw a stick of this color and shape. I am also surprised that although you threw it hundred yards away into the sea, it returned to you like an object that was living and conscious. It is all a mystery to me." Baba Mahashaya said, "My child, do you think that this is a piece of wood? It is Ananta Deva. Yesterday Nitai Chand came in the guise of an old Brahmin and gave it to me. It is conscious. It will confer great *shakti* upon anyone, who worships it with faith and devotion and will easily inspire *Krishna-lila* into his heart."

After sometime, on the *Pausa-sankranti* day, Ananta Deva was duly installed in a separate room after *mahabhisheka*² and

¹ An expansion of Lord Balarama.

² Bath ceremony.

arrangements were made for His daily service separately from the other deities.

MEETING WITH VIMALA PRASADA BABU

One day Sri Vimala Prasada Dutt (Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Mahashaya), the son of Sri Kedarnath Dutt (Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura Mahashaya) came to the Math. It is not known whether Babaji Mahashaya had met him before or not, but he received him cordially and gave him an *asana* to sit on. They talked for sometime on various subjects, after which Vimala Prasada Babu asked, "How is it that among your disciples I see different kinds of *bhava* and *vesh* (dress)?"

Babaji: None of them is my disciple. I myself could not become a disciple. I have only been wandering about to earn name and fame. How can I make anyone my disciple?

Vimala Babu: But they all introduce themselves as your disciples.

Babaji: That is due to their humility. They are all servants of Nityananda. As willed by Him they live here as my *siksha-gurus*.

Vimala Babu: Some of them have adopted *sakhi-vesh*. Have you asked them to do so?

Babaji: No, they have done so of their own.

Vimala Babu: Why don't you prevent them?

Babaji: I do not see anything wrong in it. Sometime ago there was some criticism against it. I consulted my Gurudeva. He said, "The essence of the teachings of the Goswamis is that in order to make one's *bhava* permanent one should wear the dress suited to it, speak and behave in a manner suited to it, and think about, meditate upon and do *kirtan* of the *lila*, that suits it.

Vimala Babu: Can you prove the necessity of this kind of

vesh with reference to the *shastras* and can you cite any instance in which the associates or followers of Mahaprabhu have in the past worn this kind of *vesh*?

Babaji: The importance of *vesh* has been asserted by all the *shastras*. It is according to the *shastras* that the Brahmins wear the sacred thread, which is a sign of Brahminhood and is helpful in *sadhana*. Similarly, the orange colored clothes and the *tridanda* of a *sannyasi*, the *rudraksha* and lion's skin of a Shaiva, and the *tilaka* and *kanthi* of a Vaishnava are enjoined by the *shastras*. As for the associates of Mahaprabhu, many of them have put on *vesh* according to their *bhava*. Nityananda Prabhu, who had the *bhava* of Balarama, used to put on *vesh* appropriate to that *bhava*. Almost all of His associates, who had *sakhya-bhava*, used to put on *gopa-vesh* (the dress of cowherds). Gadadhara Prabhu used to put on *gopi-vesh*. Abhirama Thakura used to carry a flute, which was appropriate to his *sakhya-bhava*. Lochanananda Das Thakura, Narahari Sarkar Thakura and some other devotees of Srikhanda sometimes met Mahaprabhu in the *vesh* of *nadiya-nagari*,¹ and sometimes went about in the *vesh* of the milkmaids of Vraja carrying pots of milk or curd.

Besides, have the *shastras* said anywhere that *vesh* according to *bhava* should not be adopted to convert *bhava* into *svabhava*?² I think not.

In this way, after talking with Baba Mahashaya on subjects relating to the principles and practices of Vaishnavism Vimala Prasada Babu left.

¹ Ladies of Navadwip.

² When *bhava* matures it becomes *svabhava*.

CHAPTER 30

SECOND VISIT TO VRINDAVAN

Only a few days had passed in Puri when Baba Mahashaya received a letter from Banamali Rai Bahadur saying, "Dada, since you have gone to Puri everyone here is very unhappy. No one is able to bear the pangs of your separation. No one is able to fix his mind upon *seva-puja* or do *lila-smarana*. Therefore kindly come to Vrindavan as early as possible. I am sending Nitayasvarupa Brahmachari with railway fare for about 25 or 30 persons." Baba Mahashaya laughed and read out the letter to everyone.

Lalita Dasi: Will you really go to Vrindavan again?

Babaji: Radharani knows. I cannot go only because someone has sent money.

After three or four days Nityasvarupa Brahmachari arrived. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "Banamali Babu has sent me with money to take you and your companions to Vrindavan."

Babaji: Very good. I had desired to worship the *nava-grahas* (the nine stars). The Lord has sent me money for it.

Nityasvarupa: If you spend the money in the worship of the *nava-grahas*, how will you go to Vrindavan?

Babaji: You need not bother about that. Do you think that it is possible to go to Vrindavan only if a rich man sends money? If this be so why should we depend on the mercy of Radharani?

NAVA-GRAHA PUJA

Baba Mahashaya got busy with arrangements regarding *nava-graha-puja*. A number of Brahmins were called. Different kinds of sweet, which are offered to Jagannath were prepared so that Jagannath's *mahaprasada* might be offered to the *grahas*. For the *puja* of each *graha* clothes of different colors, ornaments and flowers were procured. The Brahmins started *puja*. The Ashramites were asked to perform *sankirtan* with *khol* and *karatal* round the place of worship. Baba Mahashaya from time to time went near the Brahmins to give them instructions with regard to the actual process of the ritual, that was to be followed. Some Brahmins said, "We always do this kind of *puja*, yet we do not remember all the details regarding the ritual and cannot perform *puja* without consulting books, but Baba Mahashaya tells us everything without looking into the books!" Some said, "Do the *siddha-mahatmas* like him learn anything from books? They are themselves the epitome of all knowledge. Nothing is unknown to them." After the *puja* was over the Brahmins were served *mahaprasada* and given *dakshina*.¹

One might wonder why Baba Mahashaya worshipped the *nava-grahas*. If it was to avoid a calamity he could invoke Gaura-Nitai. The answer is that he did not believe in invoking Gaura-Nitai for worldly ends and purposes. He believed, according to the '*trinadapi*' *sloka*, that everyone should be respected and given his due, including the *grahas*. Besides, his worship of *nava-grahas* was not like the worship performed according to *karma-kanda*.² Though it was meant outwardly to

¹ A present given to a Brahmin to secure completion of a sacrifice or a religious performance.

² Ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites prescribed by the *shastras* for the achievement of certain ends.

propitiate them, inwardly it was to bless them by serving them with *mahaprasada* and *sankirtan*, which *karma-kanda* does not prescribe.

A number of days passed since Nityasvarupa Brahmachari had come. Every day he asked Baba Mahashaya when he would start for Vrindavan. He replied, "Brahmachari, are you mad? Do you not know that no one can go to Vrindavan unless Radharani wills. If She does not will what can I do?"

Nityasvarupa was at a fix. He could not know whether Baba Mahashaya would go to Vrindavan or not. The days were passing and he could also not write to Rajarshi to allay his anxiety. He was worried that the money he had brought for his journey to Vrindavan was spent.

THE CALL OF VRINDAVAN

One morning Baba Mahashaya went to Jagannath Temple with Phani. As soon as he went near Jagannath for *darshan* Madhava Pashunpalak threw Jagannath's *prasadi* garland round his neck. No one knows what he said to Jagannath with folded hands and tears in his eyes. He came out of the temple and said to Phani, "Look Phani, you go to the Math and tell Lalita Dasi that I am going to the station to leave for Vrindavan. I shall return soon."

Phani: How can you leave so suddenly? If you must, you should first go to the Math.

Babaji: What can I do? Jagannath has asked me to go to the station from here.

When the Ashramites came to know that Baba Mahashaya had gone to the station, all of them went to the station except the *sakhis*. The *sakhis* had orders no to stir out of the Math at any time except towards the end of night, when they could go to bathe in the sea in darkness. The Ashramites said to Baba

Mahashaya, "You are going to Vrindavan again. How shall we live without you?" Baba Mahashaya said, "All of you, who want to go with me raise your hands." Fifty persons raised their hands. Baba asked Nityasvarupa Brahmachari to purchase eight tickets for Cuttack and the rest for Calcutta. Nityasvarupa said, "I have only fifty rupees left after the *nava-graha puja*." Baba asked Balarama to pay the rest.

Baba Mahashaya went to Rasabihari Math in Cuttack with Nityasvarupa, Govinda Das, Phani and five others. He asked Rama Das to go to Calcutta with the remaining persons. After staying in Cuttack for six or seven days he went to Calcutta. He sent one man to bring his *siksha-guru* Sri Gaurahari Das Babaji from Navadwip. After about a week he called Pulin Babu and asked him to get sixty seats reserved in the train for Hathras, a station close to Vrindavan.

Pulin Babu went to Howrah Station and applied for reservation. He said to Baba Mahashaya, "Money for reservation has to be deposited tomorrow." Nityasvarupa Brahmachari and others were surprised. They began to say to one another, "None of us has money. Still he has promised to give money tomorrow. Let us see what happens." One of them said, "We have seen several times that whenever Baba Mahashaya needs money it comes from somewhere." So, it came. At night came Yogen Mitra and gave him five hundred rupees. Seats were reserved. The next day he went to Howrah Station with Gaurahari Das Babaji and his companions and boarded the train for Hathras. At Hathras he changed the train and reached Vrindavan. Ramahari Das Babaji, Madhava Das Babaji and others were already waiting at the station. They received him amidst shouts of "*Radhe, Radhe!*" and "*Jai Nitai!*"

As before, Baba Mahashaya stayed at Ganga Mata Mandir. Soon after Kamini Babu came to take him to Radhakunda. He sent his Gurudeva Gaurahari Das Babaji, Ramahari Das Babaji

and some other old Vaishnavas by conveyance and himself started on foot, doing *kirtan* with his companions. Rajarshi, Haricharan Das Babaji, Rasika Das Babaji and others received him on the way near Govardhana and took him to Vinoda Mandir. Rajarshi said to him, "Baba, I was expecting that after getting down at the station you would come directly to Vinoda Mandir. I do not know what offense I have committed on account of which you did not. Now I will not let you go anywhere else."

Babaji: No Baba, this time I have decided to live in seclusion in Kusum-sarovara.¹

Banamali: Then I shall send *mahaprasada* to Kusum-sarovara.

Babaji: No Baba, don't.

Banamali: Then what will you eat?

Babaji: Why? We have come to Vrindavan. We shall live on *madhukari*. We shall go there today.

Banamali: It appears that I have committed some offense. Otherwise I do not understand why you should not stay in Vinoda Mandir even for one night?

Baba Mahashaya could not say anything. He stayed in Vinoda Mandir that day and left for Kusum-sarovara next morning.

AT KUSUM-SAROVARA

On reaching Kusum-sarovara he asked some of his disciples to circumambulate Govardhana Hill everyday and the rest to sweep the ground around Kusum-sarovara and do *madhukari*.

¹ Sarovara means 'pond.' Kusum-sarovara is the name of a pond. The place round about is also called by this name.

Ramahari Das, Haricharan Das, Madhava Das, Shyama Das and the other *mahatmas* of Radhakunda were also staying with Baba Mahashaya at Kusum-sarovara. One day Shyama Das said to Baba Mahashaya, "You see, Kusum-sarovara is infested by thieves and dacoits. We are so many people here. They may think that we have much that can be stolen and attack us. It would be better to ask Rajarshi Babu to send two gunmen to keep a watch."

Babaji: Nothing to fear Shyam Das, Dauji¹ is here. He will protect us. You can think that I am myself keeping a watch.

Since that day Baba Mahashaya began to sleep in the open. Once when Baba Mahashaya was lying and Shyama Das was massaging his feet, Shyama Das saw that a number of people armed with *lathies* (stuffs) were roaming around the pond. He was frightened, but he could not say anything to Baba Mahashaya, since he had fallen asleep and he did not want to disturb him. Suddenly, however, Baba Mahashaya got up and said, "Shyama Das, why are you frightened?"

Shyama Das: I see so many persons coming and going with *lathis*.

Babaji: Oh, that is nothing. You lie down by my side.

Shyama Das lay by his side. After sometime he saw that some celestial persons armed with different kinds of weapon were keeping a guard in front of Kusum-sarovara and around Baba Mahashaya. Since then he did not fear.

At Kusum-sarovara the days passed happily in *katha*² and *kirtan*. On Nrisinha-Chaturdasi day Baba Mahashaya said, "Today we shall fast and do *ashtaprahar nama-kirtan*. Tomorrow

¹ Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna. His temple is there in Kusum-sarovara.

² Spiritual conversations.

row we shall circumambulate Giriraja. As he said this he started singing, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna-Hare Rama.*" Kirtan went on with full zest and enthusiasm. The sound of *kirtan* echoed back and forth and rent the sky. Everyone was in ecstasy. Everyone shed tears of love. No one knew how the day and night passed. The next morning they started circumambulating Giriraja. Some three hundred people living near about Kusum-sarovara, who had heard that Baba Mahashaya and his party would circumambulate Giriraja with *sankirtan* that day, also joined them. As Baba Mahashaya reached Giriraja, he was overwhelmed with *bhava* and began to sing:

“Oh! I see before me the same Giriraja,
without doubt
Where Krishna Balarama pasturing Their cows
roamed about.
Where in arbour'd retreats sweet flowers
bloom'd and smell'd
And Radha and Krishna and gopis in
pastimes of love revelled.
Even now here They sing and dance
in mirth and glee.
Curs'd am I, for neither my ears
can hear, nor eyes can see.
Ah! Useless my ears, useless eyes, and of
no purpose is life.
I shall jump into a river or into fire
and commit suicide.”

Thus singing he began to roll on the ground and weep and beat his head with his own hands in deep agony. His companions tried to soothe him but could not. He was carried away by

the flood tide of *bhava* and lost outward consciousness. After about an hour and a half he came to his own and began to march again singing and dancing in ecstasy. As soon as he reached *Dana-ghati*¹ there was a change in his *bhava*. He was reminded of *Dana-lila*² and began to sing:³

Krishna—

*Whither do you go gopi, what do you sell?
You must pay toll before you go, I tell.*

Radha—

*Who are you, what is your name, I say?
Who made you Dani, why block my way?*

Krishna—

*Cupid rules the valley. In his reign,
Without his permission not a grass can grow.
I am his Dani, I hold his warrant
For collecting toll. Do you not know?*

Radha—

*In the kingdom of Kamsa
No one's writ prevails but his.
He is strict and ferocious.
In his rule you must reap as you sow.*

¹ *Dana* means toll or tax; *Ghati* means valley. *Dana-ghati* is the valley where tax is collected. The place is so called because here Krishna performed *Dana-lila*.
² In this *lila*, Radha is in the state of *purva-raga*, that is, the state of dawning love, when She pines for Krishna, but has not yet met Him. She and Her associate *gopis* go through *Dana-ghati* with pots of butter and curd, ostensibly to sell these in Mathura, but with the real purpose of meeting Krishna. Krishna posing as *Dani*, or the toll-collector checks them and asks them to pay toll.
³ The song describes the amorous *lila* that follows.

By assuming the role of Dani
Without his writ
You will invite his wrath
Do you not know?

Do not wrangle with me,
And let me go.
Here you do not brawl and boast,
Go where your flute you can blow.

Krishna—

You do not fear Dani?
And you talk so glibly.
If you do not pay toll
I shall collect forcibly.

Everyday you go from here
Without paying toll, dodging me.
Today you are caught,
You can neither hide nor flee.

In lieu of all day's toll
I shall now collect
Your ornaments and the treasure
You hide in your breast.

Radha—

Touch me not shameless Krishna,
Keep away, far away from me.
I shall have twice to bathe,
Even if your shadow touches me.

Even if you go to Badrikashram

*And do tapa¹ for hundred years,
Or worship the sun all your life
And offer arghya² of your tears,*

*You cannot, you cannot touch
My body or ornaments, I say.
So do not be arrogant and venturesome
Keep away from me, keep far away.*

Krishna—

*Radhe! Your heart is my Badrikashram,
My sun your radiant face.
I do not wrangle but implore
Give me, give me your grace.*

Lalita—

*Radhe! now give Dani his due
A handful of butter and milk-drops few.*

*The sakhis gave butter to Radha and Krishna
Their prasada each of them took,
Then they made Them sit side by side
On an altar in a sequestered nook.*

*Radha said to Lalita
Go and tell every one,
Radha is sold to Him
Whom She adores forever and anon.*

*The gopis danced and sang in ecstasy.
The lila is real, no fantasy."*

¹ Austerities or penances.

² Water offered to the deity in worship for washing His feet.

From *Dana-ghati* Baba Mahashaya went to Govindakunda. There he sat for sometime under a banyan tree near the *asana*¹ of Madhavendra Puri and sang *kirtan*-songs relating to his *bhajan*, the appearance of the *vigraha* of Gopal and the ideal of service Puri Goswami established by his service of Gopal. After an hour he went to see the cave of Raghava Pandit, an associate of Mahaprabhu. Then he crossed Jatipura and sat under a tree on the *parikrama* path. Seeing that the *raja*² there was clean and pure, he requested everyone to throw some *raj* on his body so that he might have *raj-samadhi*. Ramahari Das Babaji laughed at it and threw a handful of *raj* on his body. Others also started doing the same and continued till his body was covered upto the neck. Then, with eyes closed he began to glorify *raja*.

From there Baba Mahashaya went to Radhakunda and from Radhakunda back to Kusum-sarovara.

One day Baba Mahashaya bathed early in the morning and began to pick flowers round about Kusum-sarovara. He asked others to do the same. He made many kinds of garland and bunches. At about 11 a.m. he and some of his companions went with them to Vinodaji's Temple in Radhakunda. As soon as Banamali Babu saw him he said, "Dada! Why have you come at this time, when the sun is so hot?" Baba Mahashaya replied, "The sun did not give me any trouble. This is for me a fortunate day. Radharani needed some garlands and bunches of flowers to decorate Krishna and She asked this *dasi* to bring them. So I have brought. You decorate Vinodaji with them under the guidance of Vinodini and be blest. We are all *dasis*. For us there is no heat or cold. We feel blest if Radharani does the favour of demanding some service from us. You know how Radharani, Who is even more

¹ A seat or small platform built in memory of Madhavendra Puri.

² The holy dust of Vraja.

delicate than petals of flower, goes everyday in the scorching heat of the sun to meet Krishna at Radhakunda during midday!" As he said this tears began to stream out of his eyes and with throat choked with *bhava* he sang songs relating to Radha's *abhisar*¹ and *milan*.²

One night Babaji Mahashaya was lying under a tree in front of Dauji's Temple. Shyama Das was massaging his feet. All others were asleep. All of a sudden a light, as radiant and dazzling as a thousand luminaries, emerged from the body of Baba Mahashaya. Shyama Das had to close his eyes. After sometime when he opened his eyes he saw some wondrous things, such as he had never seen before, emerging out of the light. He was bewildered and lost in speculation about them. At that time Baba Mahashaya withdrew his legs from his lap and everything disappeared. He said, "Krishna, Krishna," then called out "Shyama!"

Shyama: Yes, Baba.

Babaji: Tell me what you want.

Shyama Das was taken aback. He kept looking at Baba's face, but said nothing. Baba himself said, "Look, it is easy to find Nitai-Gaura and Radha-Krishna. They are always near and round about you. You cannot recognize Them, because your heart is not pure. In order to recognize Them you need a suitable heart in a suitable spiritual body. All the different kinds of *sadhana-bhajan* prescribed by the *acharyas* are for the attainment of that body. As soon as that body is attained Krishna is also attained."

On being told about *sadhana-bhajan* Shyama Das pulled a long face. Then Baba Mahashaya said, "But don't worry,

¹ Proceeding of a lady to meet her beloved.

² Meeting.

bhajan or no *bhajan*, by Nitai's grace you will attain everything. I have said, you will attain."

Once Baba Mahashaya was sitting with Ramahari Das Babaji, Madhava Das Babaji, Haricharan Das Babaji and some other *mahatmas* of Radhakunda, when Banamali Roy came. Baba Mahashaya said, "Look all of you. I wish that you could once go with me to Puri." They were all surprised and dismayed. Haricharan Das Babaji said, "Dada! Don't say that. Puri is *aishvarya-dham*. How can we leave *madhurya-dham* Vrindavan and go to Puri?"

Babaji: Baba, I agree that Puri Dham is *aishvarya-dham*. But did Mahaprabhu reside in *aishvarya-dham*? He looked upon Jagannath as Vrajendrananadana Krishna and Puri as Vrindavan. Therefore the followers of Mahaprabhu should regard Puri as *madhurya-dham*. *Aishvarya* and *madhurya* are relative terms. They relate to the *bhava* of the *sadhaka*. Sri Krishna is the most perfect manifestation of Bhagavan. Therefore in Him, both *aishvarya* and *madhurya* exist in their most perfect form. In one and the same *vana-bhojan-lila*,¹ for example, we find that *aishvarya* and *madhurya* exist together. Some, according to their *bhava*, look upon it as *aishvarya-lila*, some as *madhura-lila*. *Bhava* is not external or something objective. It is internal and subjective.

Haricharan: It is true that *bhava* is internal. But I cannot remain unaffected by the external world. Even if staying in a *dham* dominated by *aishvarya* you try and succeed in developing *madhurya-bhava*, the nature of the *dham* as *aishvarya-dham* will not change. How can *bhava* change the nature of the object.

Babaji: Well, tell me which of the three *dhams*—Nilachala,

¹ *Lila* in which Krishna dines in the forest with the other cowherd boys and which by its very nature is *madhura* (sweet).

Navadwip and Vrindavan, you regard as *aishvarya-dham*?

Haricharan: Everyone knows that Nilachala is dominantly *aishvarya-dham*.

Babaji: I say that Vrindavan is the *dham* of perfect *aishvarya* as well as perfect *madhurya*.

Haricharan: How is Vrindavan *aishvarya-dham*?

Babaji: There are so many *aishvarya-lilas* in Vrindavan on account of which the *aishvarya* of Nilachala fades into insignificance. The killing of Putana, Aghasura, Bakasura, Yamalarjuna, Shakatasura, Trinavarta, Vatsasura, Pralambasura and Vyomasura, the dance on the head of the multiheaded cobra Kaliya, the lifting of Govardhana, swallowing of the forest-fire, and exhibiting by Krishna the entire universe in His mouth—are these not *aishvarya-lila*? Is there anything in Nilachala that compares with them in *aishvarya*?

Haricharan: Acts like the killing of demons are not performed by Krishna, but by His partial manifest Vishnu, Who resides in Him. *Aishvarya* cannot even touch Krishna, Who is the very personification of *madhurya*.

Babaji: What you say is correct from the point of view of the *upasaka* and his *bhava*, but it cannot be generalized. How can you say that it is not Krishna Who kills Putana even when you see Him on her breast? You have yourself said that *bhava* does not change the nature of the object.

However, leave arguments aside. The plain fact is that Mahaprabhu lived in Nilachala for eighteen years and relished *Vraja-rasa* in the company of Svarupa Damodara and Rai Ramananda. We also aim at relishing *Vraja-rasa*. How can we do so if we do not accept the *anugatya* (guidance) of Mahaprabhu and the *madhurya* of Nilachala? Nilachala may be an *aishvarya-dham* for others, but for the followers of Mahaprabhu it is *Parama-dham*, the *dham* par excellence.

Ramahari Das said, "Baba, I for one agree with you totally."

My Vrindavan and Navadvip are where Mahaprabhu is.

Baba Mahashaya smiled a little and said to Haricharan Das Baba, "Panditji, now tell me what you think."

Haricharan: My doubt is gone. I understand that *bhava* is at the root of realization. The nature of the transcendental objects cannot be realized through our physical senses. *Bhava* alone enables us to realize and relish them. The same thing is relished differently, if *bhava* is different. But kindly bless me so that I do not leave *Vraja-raj*, even if the attainment possible elsewhere be superior.

Babaji: Your faith in *Vraja-raj* is praiseworthy. But I tell you that very bad times are coming. You and Rajarshi and his Vinoda-Vinodini will have to leave Vrindavan for some time.

Baba Mahashaya thus passed some days happily in *katha* and *kirtan* in Kusum-sarovara. One day he decided to go to Puri. He called Phani, Kala Krishna, Madhu Dada, Dayal Das, Shital Das and some others and said, "Look, you have to set out on foot for Puri today. In due course you will meet me there." Madhava Das Babaji saw that they were disinclined to leave the company of Baba Mahashaya. Therefore he said to him, "Dada! Why such a cruel order to these boys? Will they be able to suffer such a long journey on foot?"

Babaji: Mahaprabhu is kind to them. This is not my order, but His. If they comply unhesitatingly it will be good for them.

The boys made obeisance to Baba Mahashaya and left. Only Kala Krishna and Radhavinoda hid themselves in a forest. The next day they came to see Baba Mahashaya. Baba said angrily, "Why did you not go?" They replied, "We could not leave your company." Babaji said, "You have disobeyed Mahaprabhu. Therefore you will not only have to leave my company, you will have to suffer much more."

Baba Mahashaya stayed in Kusum-sarovara for ten or

twelve days more, after which he left for Puri with the remaining companions.

RETURN TO PURI

With Baba Mahashaya's return to Puri, Jhanjapita Math again began to bubble with life. Devotees from all over Puri began to come to the Math for his *darshan* and company. Baba Mahashaya relished to speak to them of his experiences in Vraja in the company of Ramahari Das Babaji, Madhava Das Babaji, Haricharan Das Babaji, Shyama Das Babaji, Rajarshi Banamali Das and others and to answer the questions they asked about Vraja-lila and matters relating to other transcendental subjects. One morning a devotee said, "We hear that in Jagannath Dham no one can remain hungry. Is this true?"

Babaji: If this is said in the *shastras* there is no reason why it should not be accepted as true.

Devotee: I want to know whether we take it as true only on the basis of the *shastras* or there is also some experience to support the belief.

Babaji: I do not know of any direct experience.

Talks on this and other subjects continued for sometime. Then everybody dispersed. Baba Mahashaya hurriedly took his bath and proceeded alone to Jagannath Temple. Lalita Dasi requested him to take some *prasada*, but he did not listen. From Jagannath Temple he went far beyond the Temple of Lokanath Mahadeva and lay under a Punntag tree in a thick forest, with a view to examine the traditional belief that no one can remain hungry in Puri.

The Ashramites went out in search of him but could not find him anywhere. They waited for him till two o'clock, but when he did not return most of them took *mahaprasada*. At five o'clock in the evening a *panda* of Jagannath Temple went to

Baba Mahashaya with an earthen *thal*¹ and said, "Baba, I have been searching you for a long time. Why are you here lying hungry?"

Babaji: Who told you that I was hungry?

Panda: I was going home after the midday service of Jagannath, when an old lady gave me this *thal* and said, "Look Baba, Barha Babaji Mahashaya is lying under a Punñag tree in the forest at some distance from the Temple of Lokanath. You go and give this *mahaprasada* to him and tell him that it is not proper to test the belief that no one can remain hungry in Jagannath Dham." She also gave me a four *anna* coin by way of my remuneration. Since then I have been searching you. I will not go until you have eaten."

Babaji Mahashaya was overwhelmed with *bhava*. He said with tears in his eyes, "Baba, can I disregard the *mahaprasada* so kindly sent by Yogamaya? You go home. I am going to take *mahaprasada*." After the *panda* had gone he began to weep aloud and say, "Most merciful Lord! If you were not so merciful, how could the *jivas* of Kali pin faith in you?" He returned to the Math with the *thal* containing *mahaprasada*. The Ashramites breathed a sigh of relief to see him. Lalita Dasi took the *thal* from his hand and began to make earnest inquiries about it. After Baba Mahashaya had told her everything he asked her to bring a particle of Radhakanta Deva's *prasada*. He said, "I have committed an offense by neglecting Radhakanta's *prasada*. Therefore I shall first take His *prasada*, then the *prasada* sent by Jagannath Deva."

VISIT TO UTTARAKHANDA FOR THE DARSHAN OF GURUDEVA

One day Babaji Mahashaya said to Lalita Dasi, "I shall go

¹ A plate of large size.

somewhere for some special purpose, and will return soon. You should carry on the service of Radhakanta with utmost care and devotion." The next day he left for Medinipur, where he stayed with Bankim Babu for two days. After that he left Medinipur and told Bankim Babu that he would return after eight days. But fifteen days passed, he neither returned nor any news was heard about him from anywhere. The disciples went out in different directions in search of him, but he could not be found. This caused deep anxiety amongst his followers. After a month and a half Sri Gopal Chandra Ghatak wrote a letter from Navadwip to Pulin Babu, who was staying in Mirjapur Math in Calcutta, saying that Baba Mahashaya had returned and that he was in Navadwip and would return to Calcutta after ten days. Pulin Dada, Rama Das and others breathed a sigh of relief. They rushed to Navadwip. As soon as Baba Mahashaya saw them he said guiltily to Pulin, "I have given you much trouble."

Pulin: Yes, you have. We had all become lifeless without you. You tell us yourself how our life can remain, if you go away like this without telling anyone where you are going?

Babaji: You know, I am a mad person. I do not know myself when, where and how Nitai Chand will take me.

Pulin: Where had you gone?

Babaji: Nitai Chand had taken me to Uttarakhanda for the *darshan* of Gurudeva.

Pulin: You often talk about your Gurudeva, but you never made us see him.

Babaji: What can I do? He never comes this side.

Pulin: If we knew that you were going to see your Gurudeva, we would also have accompanied you.

Babaji: You have not yet risen to the state in which you can have his *darshan*, for He is no other than Nityananda Himself.

CHAPTER 31

LAST VISIT TO PURI

After staying in Navadwip Dham for about a week more Baba Mahashaya went to Calcutta and stayed in the Agaraparha Garden. One morning while he was washing his mouth he emitted some blood. This made his companions anxious about his health. They said, "What could it be due to? Does it indicate some disease?" Baba Mahashaya replied, "This is due to some sorrowful happening in Puri." Then he went and lay in his room and covered himself with a *chadar* from head to feet. After half an hour he uttered "Kishori!" Then again he was quiet. At about 10:30 a.m. he got up and said to someone, "I will go to Puri today. Inform Pulin." He had hardly said this when Pulin came with a telegram in his hand. He said, "What news Pulin?" Seeing that Pulin was hesitant in replying he said, "I know that on the day following *Radhashtami*,¹ Radharani accepted Kishori Dasi. She is blest. Arrange for my journey to Puri. I shall go today."

The news spread in Agaraparha that Baba Mahashaya had suddenly decided to go to Puri. Many people came and began to inquire about the reason for this sudden decision.

KISHORI DASİ

Baba Mahashaya replied, "Sometime ago a twenty year old

¹ Radharani's appearance day.

boy named Advaita Das took *mantra* from me and went to Vrindavan. After seeing all the holy places connected with the *lila* of Sri Krishna, he went to Barsana. There he lived with *vairagya* and swept the Temple of Radharani. He did not talk with anyone. In the evening he covered his head with his *chadar* and danced before the Sri *vigraha* of Radharani. In the dance he often lost himself in *bhava*. The people of Barsana loved him for his *bhava-bhakti*.

"One day Radharani asked him in a dream to dance before Her in the *vesh* of a *gopi*. He ignored this as a mere dream. After three days Radharani again appeared to him in a dream and said, 'You did not dance as I had said. Tomorrow I shall send you the dress of a *gopi*. You wear and dance before Me. Remember, that is your *siddha-vesh*.'

"The next day in the evening an old lady came with a *saree* and a blouse and said to him, 'Baba, you dance before Radharani everyday. I like your dance very much. I give you this *saree* and blouse so that you may wear them while dancing.' He began to dance in that dress. Slowly he became so much attached to the dress that he could not give it up, howsoever much he tried. People began to call him Kishori Dasi. After one year he went to Puri and engaged himself in the service of Radhakanta Deva in Jhanjapita Math. Everyone was charmed by his *bhava* and loving service of the deities. During the period of his service the deities put on a new appearance. They looked so beautiful that even I sometimes wondered whether They were the same Sri *vigrahas* or different. Radharani accepted him yesterday and engaged him in Her loving service in *nitya-lila* for all times. I am happy at this. But I am sorry to have been deprived of his company, because his very sight inspired Krishna-*lila* in my heart."

Soon Baba Mahashaya took leave of everyone to go to Puri. As soon as he reached Jhanjapita Math, Lalita Dasi and

others began to weep on account of the demise of Kishori Dasi. Baba Mahashaya consoled them and inquired all about her. Lalita Dasi said, "After you had gone from here, one day we received the news that you had left Medinipur without telling anyone where you were going. This caused anxiety and despondency in the heart of everyone. All of a sudden Kishori Dasi came to me and said, 'Baba Mahashaya has left us all and gone we know not where. Navadwip Dada, Gokula Dada and Chaitanya Dada have broken the cord of affection with us and gone to the land of *lila* from where there is no return. You are always indisposed. If you also go, who will take care of us? Whose affection shall be the prop and support of our life? How shall we live?'

"I said, 'You need not have any fear or anxiety on account of me. Thousands of *dasis* like me lie under the lotus feet of Radharani, to Whom you are surrendered. You are also so dear to Her. You should whole-heartedly and ceaselessly do the service She has kindly assigned to you. You will without doubt realize what you want.'

"Kishori: No Ma, my anxiety is deep. I do not know what I should do.

"I said, 'Foolish! Why be so desperate. You know that our Lord is merciful. He always takes care of us and fulfils all our desires and aspirations.'

"Kishori: If He is so merciful, I promise that I shall pray to Him with all my heart and shall try to leave the body before you.

"I tried laughingly to trifle with her and said, 'Well, well, you need not waste your time in frivolous talks. Go and do your work.'

"She went. After a few days I looked at her and said, 'Kishori! I can see from your face that you are in anxiety. What is it about?'

"Kishori: Nothing particular Ma. I only keep thinking when Radharani will fulfil my desire.

"Since I had forgotten all about the aforesaid conversation, I thought she was referring to her *sadhana*. So, I said, 'Speak your heart to Radharani. When She has accepted you in Her service, She is bound to fulfil your desire. Do not worry.'

"Kishori: I do not worry, but I have to make two requests to you. If you promise to comply. I would say.

"I said, 'Kishori, you are childish. Allright, I promise I shall do what you say as far as I can.'

"Kishori: My first request is that when I am about to die, you remind me of the name of my *siddha-svarupa* (transcendental body). My second request is that you kindly see that at the time of my death nothing happens that is contrary to my *vesh* and *bhava*.

"This time, on account of the *bhava* I saw in her face, I could not trifle with what she said. I said, 'Kishori, you always hurt me by talking like a mad person. Why not attend with all your heart and soul to the sweet and valuable service assigned to you and be blest?'

"Kishori: What can I do? I doubt whether I shall be able to serve till *Radhashtami*.

"Just a day before *Radhashtami* she called me and said, 'Ma! I will not be able to do *Thakura-seva*¹ today. Please ask Govardhana to do it.' I did the same. But I was filled with anxiety. I called *kaviraja* Dhulirath and asked him to examine her. He examined and said, 'She is perfectly well. I do not understand why you are so anxious about her. There is nothing at all to fear.' I was not satisfied. I called a doctor. He also examined and said, 'I do not see any cause for anxiety. She has very mild fever. I shall give her medicine and she would be allright today.'

"Kishori refused to take medicine. But when I insisted

¹ Service to the deities.

she said with a smile, 'Well, do as you please.' I gave her the medicine.

"The next day was *Radhashtami*. I was busy on account of the festival. So I could not attend upon her in the morning. In the afternoon she called me and said, 'My only concern is that in my last moment I shall not get the *darshan* of Baba Mahashaya.'

"I said, 'Kishori! You have no ailment except slight fever. Why are you so apprehensive?'

"Kishori: Believe me, I feel that by Radharani's grace and your blessings I shall leave this body tomorrow between 8:30 and 9 a.m. Therefore you should not start cooking in the early hours of the morning as you do everyday.

"I burst into tears and said, 'Kishori! Will you really leave us all and go?'

"Kishori: Ma! By your blessings it appears that it will be so. You decorate me and send me to Vraja happily. I am sorry that I have to leave your sweet company and to go without having the *darshan* of Baba Mahashaya.

"As she said this she threw her arms round my neck and began to weep like a child. After sometime she contained herself and asked for *mahaprasada*. Kusum Dasi brought Radhakanta's and Jagannath Deva's *mahaprasada*. With her own hand she gave a little *mahaprasada* in the mouth of each one of us and herself took our *adharamrita*.

"The next day early in the morning we started *kirtan* round her. At 8:30 a.m. I saw that she was slowly sinking. According to her desire I uttered her *siddha* name in her ear. As soon as she heard the name her face became radiant and there was a smile on her face. I placed a garland of *Mukunda-vilasa*¹ round her neck. Others decorated her by putting a

¹ A kind of fragrant flower.

vermilion mark on her forehead and *alta*¹ round her feet. We were singing, "*Bhaja Nitai-Gaura Radhe-Shyama, Japa Hare Krishna Hare Rama.*" She started singing with us. Suddenly she shouted '*Radhe Praneshvari!*'² and became silent for ever. Her face was still radiant with a smile and her eyes were wide open and fixed on some object. It appeared that she was looking at something most astonishing and attractive when she breathed her last."

As Lalita Dasi concluded the story of Kishori Dasi's entrance into the *nitya-lila*, she began to weep. Baba Mahashaya was moved to the core of his heart. He said with a voice choked with emotion and eyes filled with tears, "Kishori Dasi has left an ideal for the *upasakas* of *madhura-rasa*. Her demise reminds me of the *nirvana*³ of Thakura Haridas."

RAJARSHI BANAMALI ROY'S VISIT TO PURI

One day Baba Mahashaya received a letter from Shyama Das Babaji. The purport of the letter was as follows:

"Vrindavan is at present suffering from the scourge of plague. Many Vrajavasis are running away from Vrindavan and Govardhana and coming to Kusum-sarovara, which is so far free from the epidemic. Banamali Babu has shifted to Calcutta with Vinoda-Vinodini and his family. Sripada Radhakanat Goswami, Haricharan Das Babaji, Nityananda Das Babaji, Rasika Das Babaji etc., have all gone with him. Kindly let me know what I should do."

Baba Mahashaya could not remain calm, when he came to know about the suffering of the Vrajavasis. He burst into tears.

¹ Red liquid to decorate the feet.

² Queen of my heart.

³ Deliverance.

After sometime he wrote to Shyama Das Baba as follows:

“Jai Nitai-Gaura!

Brother Shyama Das, I received your letter. The plague should be taken as Radharani's device for testing the faith of the people in Vraja. She wants to know whether they are attached more to Vraja or to their body. Whatever happens you should not leave Vraja. You only do *trisandhya-kirtan*¹ with the Vrajavasis and rest assured that plague will not touch you. If possible try to come to Puri before Ratha-Yatra.”

A few days before Ratha-Yatra Shyama Das, Pandit Haricharan Das and Nityananda Das came to Puri and stayed with Baba Mahashaya in the Math. Soon after a letter was received from Banamali Roy Bahadur saying that he would reach Puri with Vinoda-Vinodini and his family before Ratha-Yatra. This was followed by a telegram from Kamini Babu to Pandit Haricharan Das asking him to arrange for a suitable accommodation for Rajarshi at Puri. Haricharan Das started his search for a suitable accommodation, but could not find any. In utter helplessness he requested Baba Mahashaya to help. Baba Mahashaya said, “You need not worry. So many Raja-Maharajas come to Puri. They are all accommodated somehow somewhere. Jagannath does not turn anyone away. Let Rajarshi come. We shall see what can be done. It is also possible that he may stay in the Math and may not like to go anywhere else.”

Another telegram came next morning saying that Rajarshi Banamali Babu was reaching Puri next morning. Pandit

¹ *Kirtan* performed three times during the day.

Haricharan Baba went to Baba Mahashaya in a flurry and said, "Look here! Rajarshi is coming tomorrow morning and you have not done anything to accommodate him."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Why are you so much worried? It is not so easy for big men like him to move out. It is likely that you get another telegram saying that Rajarshi has stomach-ache, which prevents him from starting today."

Panditji: That is not possible, because they have purchased tickets.

Babaji: There is nothing that is not possible.

At five o'clock in the evening Panditji received another telegram. He read it and was stunned. He remained standing still for sometime. Then he rushed to Baba Mahashaya and fell at his feet. He said, "Baba! Forgive me for blaming you for your indifference with regard to Banamali Babu's visit."

Babaji: Why? What has happened? Whose telegram is that?

Panditji: Kamini Babu's.

Babaji: Read.

Panditji: You know it already.

Babaji: Shyama Das, you read.

Shyama Das began to read: "All of a sudden Rajarshi has developed severe stomach-ache. So we are not leaving today."

This was followed by another telegram saying, "We have started today." They arrived next morning. As soon as they reached Jhanjapita Math and went to Baba Mahashaya's room, Rajarshi and his wife said, after making obeisance to him, "Baba, we shall stay in this room and not go anywhere else."

Lalita: This room is too small and not properly ventilated. How will you live in it?

Banamali: I have not come here for Jagannath *darshan* or any other purpose. My purpose is to enjoy the company of Baba Mahashaya to my heart's content.

Then no one could say anything. Baba Mahashaya asked Lalita Dasi to vacate the room for them and shift his own things elsewhere.

Banamali Babu suffered from dyspepsia. He could hardly digest even old rice bound in a piece of cloth and boiled in half litre of water. Therefore someone asked Baba Mahashaya in his presence about arrangement to be made regarding his food. Baba Mahashaya replied, "No special arrangement. Since he is now an Ashram-*vasi* (Ashram-resident) he will eat whatever is prepared in the Ashram with the other Ashramites after all other Vaishnavas have been fed." Then he said to Banamali Babu, "Look, as long as you live in the Ashram, you will not spend a single *pice* of your own."

Banamali Babu said, "Baba, I shall abide by your wish, for am I not your own?"

Since Ratha-Yatra was near, a large number of people had come from outside and were staying in the Math. Everyday food had to be cooked for about two hundred and fifty people. Cooking took a lot of time and by the time the Vaishnavas had eaten it used to be 3 p.m. At that time Baba Mahashaya sat down to eat with Banamali Babu and the Babajis. It is surprising that though Banamali Babu was accustomed neither to the time of the meal nor the variety of things he had to eat, he digested everything well and his health was sound as long as he stayed in the Ashram.

Ratha-Yatra arrived and the usual ceremonies began. Baba Mahashaya's *kirtans* in front of the *ratha* were, as usual, the greatest attraction of the occasion. This time the participation of Rajarshi Banamali Roy and his Babaji companions in the *kirtans* added an additional charm to it. For them, however, the company of Baba Mahashaya was more important than anything else. They spent all their time with him either in *kirtan* or in conversation, in which his repartees were not only

enjoyable but enlightening and inspiring. During the conversation they got an opportunity to ask him questions regarding some of the most knotty problems, which defied their understanding, and invariably got a satisfactory answer.

ASHTAKALINA-SEVA AND SRI VIGRAHA

One evening while they were talking of *ashtakalina* Krishna-lila. Rasika Das Babaji asked, "In this Ashram we see that the service of the *vigraha* is done according to the *ashtakalina-lila*. But we do not see this kind of service anywhere else. Does it mean that this kind of service is not approved by the Goswamis?"

Haricharan: If this method of service is not generally followed, how can we say that it is not approved by the Goswamis? If the Goswamis did not approve it, Govinda-Lilamrita written by Kaviraja Goswami would have no purpose.

Rasika Das: I do not question the *ashtakalina-lila*. What I mean to ask is whether *ashtakalina-lila* is only a subject of meditation or it can also be made the object of observation through the medium of *Sri vigraha-seva*.

Haricharan: Dada, you should answer this.

Babaji: *Ashtakalina-lila-smarana* becomes easier if *Sri vigraha-seva* is also done in conformity with *ashtakalina-lila*. The very purpose of *Sri vigraha-seva* is the externalization or objectification of the *nitya-lila*.

Rasika: This is true. It is difficult to concentrate the mind on *nitya-lila* in abstraction. But if we do *vigraha-seva* in conformity with the requirements of the *ashtakalina-lila*, the *lila* is objectified and not only our minds, but the minds of all other persons, who see it, are naturally tuned to it.

Then Kusum-manjari Dasi said to Banamali Babu, "Banamali Dada, you are always engaged in *lila-smarana*. Tell me why you do not serve Radhavinoda in this manner?"

Banamali: There is no doubt that this kind of *seva* is delightful and helpful in *smarana*, but you know, I cannot by nature tolerate for a moment that Vinoda and Vinodini part company from each other.

Kusum: If you always keep Vinoda and Vinodini together how would you reconcile this kind of *seva* with *Vraja-lila*? In *Vraja-lila* the *bhava* is *parakiya*. The root of *parakiya-rasa* is uncertainty of union.

Haricharan: What you say is correct. But Kaviraja Goswami, while delineating the qualities of Sri Krishna in *Chaitanya Charitamrita* has said that He dallies with Radha day and night in *Kunja*, which means that there is never any separation.

Kusum: If this means that Krishna and Radha are always together in the *kunja* then *ashtakalina-lila* is not possible, nor is there any possibility of *Dasya*, *Sakhya* or *Vatsalya-rasa* in *Vraja*.

Haricharan: *Ashtakalina-lila* must be admitted. But what Kaviraja Goswami has written cannot be false. I do not know how to reconcile the two. I would request Baba Mahashaya to enlighten us on this.

Babaji: Baba, in my humble understanding, in *Vraja-lila*—*Dasya*, *Sakhya*, *Vatsalya* and *Madhura*—all these *bhavas* are always present, but they are all *parakiya*. Therefore they are all characterized by uncertainty. The cowherds who regard themselves as the servants of Krishna say to themselves, “Krishna is our own master, but we do not know whether He will accept our service today or not.” Those who regard Krishna as their friend say, “Krishna enjoys pasturing as much as we do, but we do not know whether today He will go with us for pasturing or not.” Nanda and Yashoda say, “There is no dearth of milk and butter in our home, but Krishna is not satisfied, if He does not eat at the hands of other *gopis*, as if He is not our son but theirs. We have prepared some dainties for Him today, but we do not know whether He will eat or not.” The *gopi* rushes to meet Krishna on

hearing the flute but thinks, "I do not know whether I shall find Krishna or not. May be He has been seduced by another *gopi* and taken to her *kunja*; may be He has gone back home for fear of Nanda and Yashoda." The *bhava* of Vraja being thus characterized throughout by uncertainty and doubt is *parakiya*. Therefore for a *sadhaka* of Vraja-rasa, Radha-Krishna can be together only for sometime, not always. As regards Krishnadas Kaviraja's statement that Krishna always dallies with Radha in *kunja*, I think, it does not mean that They are always together bodily. It means that wherever Krishna is and whatever He does, He is mentally always with Radha, dallying with Her in the *kunja*. Still if a certain *sadhaka* is so absorbed in a particular *rasa* that he is completely oblivious of the changes in time and looks upon Radha and Krishna being always together in a particular state, that is not contrary to Vraja-*bhava*. But is it easy to disregard the changes in time and circumstances? Is it possible for the *sadhaka* sweating in the scorching heat of the sun to realize in his *smarana* that he is enjoying the cool and soothing rays of the full moon on a *Purnima* night?"

Banamali Roy stayed in the Math for a number of days after Ratha-Yatra to enjoy the sweet company of Babaji Mahashaya and then left for Calcutta.

GURU-PURNIMA¹

After Ratha-Yatra almost everyone, who had come to see the festival, left the Math. Only Gaurahari Das Babaji, the *siksha-guru* of Babaji Mahashaya remained. On the *Guru-purnima* day the Ashram assumed a festive look. Everyone was busy making arrangements for *Guru-puja*. But Nityasvarupa

¹ The day on which the guru is worshipped.

Brahmachari and Kusum Didi¹ were sitting near Babaji Mahashaya and discussing the *Guru-tattva* and *Guru-puja*. They held opposite views.

Nityasvarupa Brahmachari said, "Guru and Krishna are one. The *shastras* declare this unequivocally. Therefore guru should be worshipped in the same manner in which Krishna is worshipped. He should be offered *amaniya*² and not *prasada*. To regard the guru as only a means for the attainment of Krishna is like engaging a lawyer for winning one's case. As soon as the case is won the lawyer ceases to have any importance. The guru should be worshipped before the deity is worshipped and he should be worshipped till the end."

Kusum said, "If guru and Krishna are one, there is no sense in worshipping Krishna separately. If Krishna cannot be worshipped separately then the Krishna-*mantra* given by the guru has no meaning. The guru is a *bhakta*, therefore he cannot be worshipped as Bhagavan."

Both quoted the *shastras* in support of their views. Ultimately they requested Baba Mahashaya to give his verdict.

Baba Mahashaya said, "Listen, there is no *bhava* with which the guru cannot be worshipped. The only thing is that the *bhava* should be pure. You can worship him with any *bhava*, which is dear to you and in which you have unflinching faith. But you must not criticize the *bhava* of others. Criticism emanates from jealousy, hatred, malice or desire to prove one's self superior to others. So long as the heart is governed by these vices, devotion to the guru cannot be sincere and absolute. Therefore, purge your heart of these impurities and listen to what I say.

"Everything in the spiritual world has two aspects—

¹ Sister.

² Food not offered to the deity.

tattva, or the thing as it is in itself, and *lila*. *Lila* is experienced, *tattva* is inferred. The relationship between the two is that of difference-in-non-difference. Therefore even though the two are inextricably interlocked they should not be regarded as one and the same. What Nityasvarupa has said is true so far as the *Guru-tattva* is concerned. That the guru is identical with Bhagavan is accepted not only in Vaishnavism, but also in the Shakta, Shaiva and Ganapatya religions. But they cannot be regarded as one in *lila*. Mahaprabhu's way of worship, or *bhajan*, is called '*raganuga*.' The central principle of *raganuga-bhajan* is *anugatya*, or serving under guidance. The *sadhaka* serves Krishna under the guidance of the guru. If Krishna and the guru are identical, guidance is not possible. The guru's guidance is not like the guidance of the lawyer, which ceases as soon as the goal is achieved. Even in the *nitya-lila* the guidance of the *Guru-rupa-sakhi* (Guru in the form of *sakhi*) continues. The guru's order is always to be obeyed."

Nityasvarupa: What should the disciple do if the guru himself orders that he should be worshipped as Bhagavan?

Babaji: I do not think that any guru can ask his disciple to worship him as Bhagavan. But if he does and the disciple has absolute faith in his words and does not for a moment feel attracted by any other *Sri vigraha* or Name, he can worship him as Bhagavan. He will be duly rewarded for this. But the Lord Himself will decide what to do with the guru.

Sri Gaurahari Das Babaji was happy to hear this. He said, "This is the correct explanation of the guru principle. It should be scrupulously followed by both the guru and the disciple. If they do not, they will both come to grief."

By this time arrangements for *Guru-puja* were completed. Baba Mahashaya worshipped his guru with flowers, *tulasi* and *chandan* and performed his *arati*.

BIRTHDAY CEREMONY

For sometime Sri Atulkrishna Goswami Prabhu, the learned and most highly respected Goswami of Calcutta, had been staying in Puri with his wife. He stayed in the Pranavallabha Math, but most of his time he passed in the company of Babaji Mahashaya in the Jhanjapita Math, talking about one aspect or the other of Sri Krishna-*lila*. One day, when he came to the Math, he saw that Baba Mahashaya had gone to Jagannath Temple and the Ashramites were conferring with one another about something with great excitement. He asked them what the excitement was about. Lalita Dasi said, "We have nothing to hide from you, but you must not disclose it to Baba Mahashaya."

Prabhu: I promise, I will not only not disclose it to him, but will cooperate with you in every respect, if what you are conferring about is in general interest.

Lalita: We had long desired to celebrate the birthday of Baba Mahashaya, but could not, because he would not let us know the date of his birth. But now by your grace we know it.

Prabhu: How could you know?

Lalita: That is an interesting story. Yesterday *Mahatma* Karhar Swami, the famous astrologer of Kashi, had come. He read the palm of Baba Mahashaya and told him many things about his past life, including the date and time of his birth, which Baba Mahashaya confirmed. Govardhana, who was standing by told me all about it, but he did not remember the date of birth. I thought I would send someone to the astrologer to inquire about the date, but the astrologer had left for Calcutta the same day. I then thought of a clever device. This morning, when Baba Mahashaya was washing his mouth and I was standing by, I started talking about astrology and said, "I do not believe in astrology. The astrologers are a hoax."

Baba Mahashaya said angrily, "What do you know of astrology? You have met only quacks and not real astrologers like Karhar Swami, who came yesterday and read my palm so accurately."

I said, "He must have told you many things about your future. Who can say whether they are true or false? Only time will prove. If he said something about your past, which you knew was correct, that is another matter. Did he do so?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "He did."

I asked, "Could he say anything about your birth?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "Yes, yes, he told me so accurately about the date and time of my birth—*Bangabda* 1260,¹ *Chaitra*, *Sankranti*, *Trayodashi*, *Vrihaspativar* (Thursday) *Purva-phalguni nakshatra*, *sinha-lagna*."

As soon as I heard this there was no end to my joy and excitement I could not control myself and burst into laughter. Baba Mahashaya understood everything. He tried somehow to cover up what he had said. But I said, "It is now no use trying to hide it. When the sun is up, who can hide it? The date of birth is known. Even if we do not celebrate it, someone will."

Thus after narrating everything, Lalita Dasi said to Atul Krishna Goswami, "Now only two days are left for *sankranti*. You have to manage everything."

Prabhu: Didi, I cannot say how happy I feel about it. I shall do all I can. I am going to inform my wife. She will also cooperate.

He went home and narrated the whole thing to his wife. She was extremely happy. She went to the Math and discussed everything with Lalita Dasi. She asked her to collect everything that was needed for the function and said, "You do not fear Baba Mahashaya. It would be my responsibility to see that

¹ The year of the Bengali calendar which corresponds to 1853 A.C.

he does not create any difficulty." Ma Goswami's words inspired courage in their hearts. They started making preparations. When Baba Mahashaya returned from the Jagannath Temple he said to Nanda Das, one of the inmates of the Ashram, "I see that everybody is busy, as if they are preparing for a big function. Tell me what this is all about." Nanda Das kept quiet. But Atul Krishna Goswami, who was there, said, "I also see that today the Ashram wears a festive look. Everyone has a joyful face and sparkling eyes, as if he is treading on enchanted ground. I wonder what this is all due to. What do you think?"

Babaji: I do not know. But today is Mahavishuva Sankranti and the birthday of Sri Hanuman. May be they are going to celebrate that.

At this time came Radha Krishna Dada from Cuttack. Baba Mahashaya asked, "How do you come?"

Radha Krishna: How, I cannot say. I never thought I shall come at this time and have your *darshan*. But something, I know not what, attracted and brought me here.

Similarly, Shatchandra Ghosh came from Kendraparha and a number of devotees from other nearby places. Each one of them said that he came because he was automatically drawn by something. In the afternoon Baba Mahashaya said to Radha Krishna Dada, "I have not seen Lalita Dasi since morning. What is she doing?"

Radha Krishna: She is busy preparing different kinds of sweets and other things for *bhoga*.

These developments made Baba Mahashaya suspect that they were in connection with the celebration of his birthday. Therefore he smiled and said, "Very well, I go. You go and tell Lalita."

Radha Krishna: When will you come?

Baba Mahashaya: I do not know when.

This made Radha Krishna Dada anxious. He went and told Lalita Dasi that Baba Mahashaya was going and did not say when he would return. Lalita Dasi came rushing and said to Baba Mahashaya, "Look, we have hitherto been following your commands to the letter. Never once we did anything according to our own wish. Today you will have to fulfil our wish. You will not go out of the Ashram till tomorrow evening and will let us do what we want. If you don't, we shall not do any Thakura-seva in the Ashram even if we have to go to hell!"

Baba Mahashaya could not but smile appeasingly and say, "Well, we shall see."

Early next morning Ma Goswamini came and called Baba Mahashaya. He came and touched her feet. She asked him to sit on the *snana-bedi*¹ for *abhisheka*.² He complied like an obedient child. She started massaging his body with a paste of turmeric and oil. After a little while Baba Mahashaya said, "Ma, this is enough. You will be overstrained." Ma replied delightfully, "Baba, a mother has to do this for the good of the child and instead of feeling any strain she feels happy in doing it. I am happy to have a child like you and consider myself fortunate in getting this opportunity of celebrating your birthday." The Ashramites joined Ma Goswamini in the massage. After the massage was done they bathed him first with 108 pitchers of well water, then with Ganges water, *panchamrita*,³ and water from different *tirthas*.⁴ Then they gave him silken *dhoti* and *chadar* to wear and decorated him with flower garlands, sandal paste and saffron etc., and made him sit on a beautifully decorated *sinhasana*. Baba Mahashaya like

¹ Altar for bathing.

² Ritualistic bath.

³ A mixture of milk, *ghee*, curd, honey and sugar used for sanctification.

⁴ Holy places.

an obedient child allowed himself all the time to be treated as they wished. He was then offered sweets and *prasada* of various other kinds specially prepared for the occasion. Each one of the Ashramites put something into his mouth with his own hand and he ate it with relish. At the end one of them performed *arati* before him with *pancha-pradip*,¹ while the others sang and danced in ecstasy. At night a grand feast was arranged to which the *mahatmas* of all the Maths in Puri were invited.

¹ A metallic holder of five lamps.

CHAPTER 32

LAST DAYS IN NAVADWIP

Raja-guru Sripad Raghunath Deva Goswami was a great devotee. He used to come to Babaji Mahashaya everyday. One day he said, "Look Dada, I am getting weaker and weaker everyday on account of diabetes. I have to pass urine several times at night." Baba Mahashaya said, "Don't worry. We shall go to the bank of Ganges one day. Their water shall mix with water and you will do *bhajan* happily the rest of your life."

Sripad was happy to hear this and said, "When do we go?"

"Let us go next Monday," replied Baba Mahashaya.

Lalita Dasi was alarmed. Later, on getting a suitable opportunity she asked Baba Mahashaya what he meant by saying "water shall mix with water." He replied, "You need not bother about that. You do your *seva* with single-minded devotion. *Seva* is the means as well as the end."

Lalita Dasi: But I am very much alarmed to hear that. Howsoever much I try, I cannot be at peace.

Babaji: What do you think I meant?

Lalita Dasi: I think you meant that on the bank of the Ganges you would take upon yourself the malady of Sripad.

Babaji: Suppose I do so, will that be wrong? If by forsaking this wretched and good for nothing body I can save a good life, will it not be a matter of great good fortune for me?

This caused consternation in the hearts of Lalita Dasi and others who were present there. They began to weep. Then Baba smiled and said, "I do not understand why you should suffer under a false apprehension. Life and death depend upon Nitai Chand. He has so far made me live and dance like a doll in His hands. If He wants He will make me dance more, otherwise not. What He does is always for our good. You need not entertain any fear. Do *Harinama* and *seva*." He tried to soothe them with these words and went to Jagannath Temple for *darshan*.

From that day whatever Baba Mahashaya said had a double meaning. Indirectly it indicated his total indifference to life and things terrestrial. When anyone asked him to clarify what he meant, he laughed it away. He came to know that the Ashram was in debt. So one day he went before Sri Radhakanta Deva and said, "O Thakura! When I undertook to serve You and took possession of this Math of Yours, I thought it was without any earthly possessions or source of income and therefore the proper place for *sadhus* to live in. Now I find that You have other properties attached to the Math and also some debt to pay. I thought that You were a cowherd. But now I find that You are a Landlord! But now that I have undertaken to serve You, I shall try to pay Your debt. As soon as You are out of debt I shall entrust Your service to some *mahanta* and be free from all obligations." Sometimes he said to his companions, "Look, this Math is not proper place for you. There is *Maya* in it. The proper place for you is where Thakura-*seva* depends entirely upon begging."

Slowly the debts of the Math were cleared. Only the debt owed to one Harischandra Ghosh remained. Balarama said to Baba Mahashaya, "You need not worry about that. I shall pay." He was happy to hear this. He said to Sri Radhakanta Deva, "Thakura! I am now free. The responsibility of paying Your debt rests upon Balarama Das." And he began to strike his arms

on the sides in joy. The next day he decided to go with Sripad Raghunath Deva Goswami to Navadwip.

Balarama Das said, "What?! You will go tomorrow?"

Babaji said, "I am getting restless for the *darshan* of Sri Gurudeva in Navadwip and for a bath in the Ganges. You should not try to obstruct. I am now a free-lance. Who can prevent me from doing what I want." Soon after he went to the Jagannath Temple for *darshan*.

Balarama Das and others were petrified. They began to confer with one another. Balarama Das said, "We have dug our own grave. We had thought that if we cleared the debts and made Baba Mahashaya free from anxiety, he would happily stay in the Math. But the result has been contrary. We should not have paid off the debts." Others said, "No one can flout the will of Baba Mahashaya. He has his way of making you do what he wants whether you want it or not. Therefore we should cooperate with him so that he may be happy, even if it be at the cost of our own happiness. We can suffer everything, but not his displeasure."

ON WAY TO NAVADWIP

The next day Babaji Mahashaya started for Navadwip with Raghunath Das Goswami, Govinda Baba, Kali Das Brahmachari, Sitarama Das and some others. Next morning they reached Howrah Station, where they changed the train for Magara. From Magara they had to go to Navadwip by steamer. The steamer-*ghat* was about a mile from Magara Station. They had gone only a short distance from Magara, when the steamer left. But Baba Mahashaya continued his march. Raghunath Das Goswami said, "Dada, why are you going further. We shall not get the steamer today." Baba Mahashaya said smilingly, "Look Prabhu. If the Name can

make the impossible possible and if with the help of the Name we can get anything that is otherwise not obtainable, should it not be possible to get the steamer, which is only a trifle? Let us see."

Then he shouted "*Haribol!*" and began to fly his *chadar* in the air. And lo! The steamer stopped after going a long distance from the *ghat*. It started again after they had boarded it. When the steamer reached Guptiparha, Baba Mahashaya said, "Let us get down here." They got down at Guptiparha although they had tickets for Navadwip. No one could understand why Baba Mahashaya had suddenly decided to get down at Guptiparha. Govinda Das asked, "Baba, where shall we go from here?"

Babaji: I want to go to the house of Kunja Das Goswami.

Govinda Das: But that is two miles from here. Besides it is now dark and the way lies through the forest.

Babaji: May be that Kunja Das Goswami and Vipina Bihari Goswami are waiting for us at a *ghat* near by.

Govinda Das looked at Baba Mahashaya with astonishment and said, "Let us see what Nitai Chand has willed."

Kunja Das Goswami and Vipina Bihari Goswami were actually sitting at a *ghat* nearby and were saying to each other, "We have not seen Barha Babaji Mahashaya for sometime. It would indeed be great fun if he arrives here by the next steamer." Just then Baba Mahashaya shouted "*Haribol!*" Both of them got up with a start and rushed in that direction. They had gone only a short distance when they saw the great Babaji Mahashaya, the treasure of their heart greeting them with an enchanting smile. They lay prostrate before him. He lifted and hugged them close to his heart. All shouted "*Haribol!*"

MERCY

After staying with Kunja Das Goswami for three or four

days Baba Mahashaya left for Navadvip by boat. While the boat was moving Baba Mahashaya and his companions were talking about different subjects relating to *sadhana*. Kali Das Brahmachari asked, "How can the *jiva*, engrossed in *Maya*, be made to turn towards God?"

Babaji: The *kripa* of the guru or the *sadhu* is the only means by which the *jiva* can be delivered from *Maya*.

Kali Das: How can the *kripa* of the guru or the *sadhu* be attained?

Babaji: *Kripa* is causeless. It cannot be attained by *sadhana*.

Kali Das: *Kripa* should bless every one equally. But it does not. It blesses the ones it chooses without any cause. Does it not mean that *kripa* is biased?

Babaji: *Kripa* rains equally upon everyone, but it bears fruit in different persons according to their respective qualification or ability to absorb it, just as the rain falls equally everywhere, but it flows down the hill, and is retained or absorbed by the ground that is low or sandy.

Kali Das: This means that the qualification of the person upon whom *kripa* rains is more important than *kripa* itself. If *kripa-shakti* cannot break through the disqualification or the disability of the person upon whom it rains, then what is the importance of *kripa* and the *sadhus* from whom it comes?

Babaji: You are right. In fact there is nothing the *sadhus* or their *kripa* can not do. *Kripa* flowing in a particular direction has the power not only to drown the twigs and straws, but to melt and sweep away the mountains that come in its way. But *kripa* is independent. It flows in the direction in which it chooses. The *sadhus* and the *mahatmas* do not have the power to change its direction. They do not govern *kripa*, but are themselves governed by it.

Kali Das: Then, is the course of *kripa* not determined by anything?

Babaji: No, it is not determined by anything. *Kripa* itself is the cause of *kripa*. It can, however, be said that generally its course is downwards. It seeks the lower level. It blesses the lowly and the humble, the penitent and remorseful, while it ignores those sitting high on the mountain-top of self-conceit or egotism.

Kali Das: How can the *Maya*-bound *jivas* of Kali be made to come down from the mountain-top of egotism and ignorance?

Babaji: *Nama-sankirtan* is the only remedy. It is for this reason that Mahaprabhu came to inaugurate the *sankirtan-mahayajna*.

Kali Das: But *nama-sankirtan* is also conditioned by faith. Without faith it cannot fructify.

Babaji: It is good if one has faith. But *nama-sankirtan* does bear fruit even if practised without faith. It is also an effective means of generating faith.

This kind of conversation continued till 7 p.m., when the boat reached Baral Ghat in Navadvip. Baba Mahashaya went to the Ashram of Gurudeva near Baral Ghat and made obeisance to him. He and the other inmates of the Ashram were happy beyond description to find him in their midst.

DELIVERING GOPAL GHATAK FROM THE MOUTH OF DEATH

Next morning Baba Mahashaya deputed Govinda and Phani in the service of Raghunath Deva Goswami and himself went out for *darshan* in the temples of Nityananda Prabhu, Advaitacharya and Mahaprabhu. At 10 o'clock it suddenly came to his mind that he must go to the house of Sri Gopal Ghatak. When he reached there he saw Gopal Ghatak's mother, Vaishnavi Dasi, weeping. She held him by the hand

and took him to Ghatak Mahashaya. Ghatak Mahashaya had been suffering from fever and some stomach disease, which the doctors said could not be cured. He could neither sit nor talk. With great difficulty he could recognize his dearest Dada. Tears streamed out of his eyes, but he could not say anything. Tears also trickled down the eyes of Baba Mahashaya. He shouted "*Jai Nityananda Rama!*" and sat down on his bed. Then placing his left hand on his chest he said, "Do not fear. Nitai Chand has already told me about your condition. So I have come. By the grace of Nitai Chand you will be allright tomorrow." Turning to Vaishnavi Dasi he said, "Ma, you do *ashtaprahar-kirtan* tomorrow and *adhivas-kirtan* this evening."

Vaishnavi Dasi: Gopal's illness has broken my heart and paralyzed my body. I do not know how I shall make arrangements for *kirtan*.

Babaji: Ma! Do not worry about the arrangements. We are your children. You don't have to make any arrangements for us. We shall take *mahaprasada* in the Ashram and come here to do *kirtan*.

Vaishnavi Dasi: Baba, I have nothing to say. Gopal knows you and depends upon you and no one else. He is your own. You save him or kill him as you please.

Baba Mahashaya: Ma! Do not fear. Gopal belongs to Nitai Chand. He will protect him. Our duty is only to chant His Name, which we shall do.

Baba Mahashaya went back to the Ashram. In the evening he returned with a number of *mahatmas*. He started *adhivas-kirtan*, which lasted till 10:30 p.m. At the end of the *kirtan* Baba Mahashaya asked Ghatak Mahashaya how he was feeling. He replied, "By your grace I am feeling much better. I am now free from all anxiety. I do not care whether I die or live. In your presence death is as delightful as life. My only request to you is that you may kindly be near me in my last moment, so that even

if I do not remember Nitai-Gaura at that time, I die hearing Their Names from your mouth.

Babaji: Do not fear. When Nitai Chand attracts any one and wants to take him away, He also assumes the responsibility of his last moment.

Baba Mahashaya went to the Ashram. The next day he came early in the morning with a number of *mahatmas* and started *kirtan*. At 9 o'clock he went to Ghatak Mahashaya. He was sitting. As soon as he saw Baba Mahashaya he lay prostrate before him. Baba Mahashaya lifted and embraced him. Immediately after the embrace he felt that his malady was gone and he was as healthy and strong as ever. Baba Mahashaya took him to the room where *kirtan* was going on and asked him to roll on the ground. He took off his clothes and began to roll and sing with the *kirtan*. Everyone was surprised to see that the man who was about to die only a day before, was rolling on the ground and singing. After he had rolled on the *kirtan*-ground Baba Mahashaya said, "Now by the grace of Nitai-Gaura you are alright." He held him by the hand and began to dance. Both were dancing in ecstasy and the eyes of both were shedding tears of love and joy. The *kirtan* continued till next morning, after which Baba Mahashaya took Ghatak Mahashaya to the Ganges for a bath. At noon Ghatak Mahashaya arranged a feast in which he served the Vaishnavas himself.

SRI HARI SABHA AND SHITIKANTHA GOSWAMI

At this time Baba Mahashaya sat in the Ashram of his Gurudeva in Navadwip like a wish-fulfilling tree, fulfilling the wishes of all and sundry who came to him. He cured their diseases, cleared their doubts and relieved them of their anxiety by serving them in more ways than one so that they might serve the Lord more freely. In this connection the story of the

manner in which he relieved Sri Shitikantha Bhattacharya Goswami, the *sevait* of the Mahaprabhu of Hari Sabha of his anxiety, may be described. Hari Sabha is a famous institution in Navadwip. It was founded by *mahatma* Vrajanath Vidyaratna, the grandfather of Shitikantha Goswami and a renowned Vaishnava, whose devotion to Mahaprabhu was unparalleled. The exquisitely beautiful Sri Murti of Mahaprabhu standing in a dancing pose with one hand raised in Hari Sabha was installed by him. Babaji Mahashaya used to say that that Sri Murti had stolen his heart and whenever he thought of Mahaprabhu it was that Sri Murti, which flashed before his mind. Shitikantha Goswami's devotion to Sri Murti was also unparalleled. It appeared from his behaviour towards the Sri Murti that he was one of the *nitya-parikaras* (eternal associates) of Mahaprabhu. Whenever he faced a problem in connection with the *seva* of Mahaprabhu or some celebration in Hari Sabha, he went before the Sri Murti and said angrily, "Look, if You do not solve this problem or remove this difficulty, I shall pull down this raised up right hand of Yours. If You do not want to be so treated, You must set things right." Invariably Mahaprabhu had to submit to his threat and fulfil his wish. Once when in connection with a certain festival in Hari Sabha, hundreds of people sat down to eat and *mahaprasada* was being served, thick clouds gathered all over the sky and it appeared that it was going to pour heavily. Everyone was scared. At that time Shitikantha Goswami went before Mahaprabhu. His whole body trembled with anger and his eyes were red. He showed Him a pot in his hand and said, "Look! If a single drop falls, I shall break Your head with this." And lo! A strong gale of wind came and swept away the clouds and the sky became clear. Such things happened many times in his life.

The relationship between Babaji Mahashaya and Shiti-

kantha Goswami was affectionate. Shitikantha called him "Dada" and he treated him like his younger brother. One day Shitikantha came to him and said, "Look Dada! I am not able to carry on the *seva* of Mahaprabhu. Now you do what you can."

Babaji: Why worry? It is not you, but Mahaprabhu Himself Who is carrying on the *seva*. We are only tools in His hand."

Shitikantha: Even then from time to time I get very much worried.

Babaji: Well, tell me what I can do so that you are at peace.

Shitikantha: You will have to take the entire responsibility of Mahaprabhu and His household, including me, my wife and my grandmother. I am your younger brother. I shall do as you bid.

Babaji: Very well. I take the entire responsibility from today. You are free from all anxiety. You only do the *seva-puja* of Mahaprabhu as best as you can.

Shitikantha: It will not do only to say that. You will have to enter into a written agreement so that you and I and all others concerned are bound by it.

Babaji: You may do so, if you think you will not be at peace without it.

An agreement was written and signed on a stamp-paper. On the *Purnima* of the month of *Magh*, Baba Mahashaya and his companions formally entered the Hari Sabha doing *kirtan*. Baba Mahashaya performed *kirtan* before Mahaprabhu for a long time, in which he sang extempore verses, which indicated that he was surrendering himself at His feet for ever. When the *kirtan* was over Mata Thakurani, the grandmother of Shitikantha came. Baba Mahashaya at once held her feet and said, "Ma! I am your child. From today I have taken the entire responsibility of the household of Mahaprabhu. Shitikantha is completely relieved of it. Whenever and whatever need you have kindly let

me know without any hesitation and I shall fulfil it." Mata Thakurani placed her left hand on his head and said with eyes swimming in tears, "Baba! May you live long. My Shiti was so long without any succour or support. He now has in you an elder brother, who will look after him. Both of you serve Gaura together and be blest."

Baba Mahashaya appointed a *pujari* for the *seva* of Mahaprabhu and arranged for the daily offering of *bhoga*. *Seva* went on satisfactorily. Shitikantha and Mata Thakurani were happy. But Baba Mahashaya did not get the agreement he had signed duly registered, as Shitikantha wanted, so that the *seva* of Mahaprabhu of Hari Sabha was transferred to him, but the actual possession of Hari Sabha remained with Shitikantha.

PREMA VERSUS SEVA

Baba Mahashaya always attached greater importance to *seva* or the loving service of Krishna and the Vaishnavas than to *prema* or love of Krishna as such. This is proved by a particular episode, which is as follows:

Once there was discussion between Baba Mahashaya and the Vaishnavas of Navadwip regarding *mahaprasada*. Baba Mahashaya held that whosoever touched or ate *mahaprasada* it remained undesecrated. He quoted profusely from the *shastras* in support of this. The Vaishnavas said that those quotations applied only to *mahaprasada* of Jagannath in Puri and therefore the general belief in Puri was that Jagannath's *prasada* could not be defiled. Baba Mahashaya argued that *bhoga* offered to the deity became *mahaprasada*, because the deity ate it and His *adharamrita* got mixed with it. The *mahaprasada* thus became *chinmaya* or spiritualised, and could not be desecrated. If it was believed that the *bhoga* offered to the deities in places other than Puri was defiled by the touch of anything profane, that

would imply that the *bhoga* was not eaten by the deity and that the Vaishnavas in other places did not eat *mahaprasada* but *amaniya*, which was an offense. The discussion continued for several days. Ultimately, the Vaishnavas admitted that *mahaprasada* could not be desecrated. Baba Mahashaya celebrated the occasion by organizing a feast to which all the Vaishnavas of Navadwip were invited. Rama Das Babaji was asked to do *kirtan*. He started *kirtan* early in the morning. Suddenly in the midst of *kirtan* he exclaimed “*are amara Nitai re!*—O my Nitai, O my Nitai!” and burst into tears. He continued to sing this single line for long. As he sang he wept and made others weep. He lost all consciousness of time. The *kirtan* continued till 12 a.m. On account of *kirtan*, *bhoga* could not be offered and the Vaishnavas kept waiting for *mahaprasada*. Baba Mahashaya came and said “Rama! You have learnt only to be lost in *prema* and to weep in *kirtan*, disregarding Vaishnava-seva. It is 12 o’clock and your *kirtan* has not yet stopped. *Bhoga* is ready, but cannot be offered on account of *kirtan* and the Vaishnavas cannot be fed. You do not know how much they are being inconvenienced. Of what use is your *prema* without *seva*. You must learn that *sevananda* (the joy of *seva*) is superior to *premananda* (the joy of *prema*).”

Kirtan was stopped. After *bhoga-arati* and Vaishnava-seva Baba Mahashaya sat down to eat. He looked round and said, “Where is Rama?”

Someone said, “He is sitting on the bank of the Ganges and weeping.”

“Oh! He is angry,” he said and went out of the Ashram and called aloud, “Rama!”

Rama Das came with a long face bent downward. Baba Mahashaya embraced him lovingly and said, “Look, a *sadhaka* should keep his eye on everything and take special care to see that he does not do any harm or cause inconvenience to

anyone. Since *kripa* of the guru and the Vaishnavas is his only hope, he should particularly avoid committing any offense against the Vaishnavas." He held him by the hand and took him in and made him sit by his side for eating. While eating he took some dainties from his *pattal* and putting them on the *pattal* of Rama Das said, "This is delicious. Have some more of it." Rama Das was assuaged.

Baba Mahashaya scolded Rama Das, because he was so lost in *premananda* that he forgot all about *seva*—the *seva* of the Thakura and the Vaishnavas. Both the Thakura and the Vaishnavas would have been put to inconvenience, if *kirtan* continued beyond 12 a.m., because it would not have been possible to offer *bhoga* to the Thakura at proper time and the feeding of the Vaishnavas, which could be done only after the *bhoga* was offered and *arati* was performed, would have been very much delayed. Baba Mahashaya could not tolerate this. He believed that *premananda* was good, but if it obstructed *sevananda*, it should be discarded. *Chaitanya Charitamrita* says:

"nija premananda sevananda badhe,
se anander prati bhakter haya krodhe.

(Cc. 10.4.71)

—If *premananda* obstructs Krishna-*sevananda* the devotee feels exasperated."

This also implies that service or *seva* is superior to *prema* or love. In fact, love is service. It fulfils itself in service. It feels self-satisfaction in self-sacrifice. It sacrifices its own happiness for the happiness of the object it loves, and paradoxical, as it may seem, in so doing it experiences a much higher kind of happiness.

Love is by nature other-regarding. Love which is self-regarding and does not result in service, is like a heart that does not beat. Therefore the end, which Mahaprabhu laid down for us, is not love of Krishna, but the loving service of Krishna, and since Krishna is pleased more by the service of His devotees

than His own service, love, according to Him means loving service to Krishna and His devotees and, in fact, to all the *jivas* created by Him. The man who realizes love, or Krishna-*prema*, is the man who serves, who cannot but serve and sacrifice his happiness for the sake of others. Therefore Baba Mahashaya's life of love was throughout the life of service and sacrifice.

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

The time had now come for Baba Mahashaya to withdraw himself and his *lila* from the mundane plane. The end had to be in conformity with his life—an act of service and sacrifice for someone he loved. And so it was. He had already hinted this in his conversation with Raghunath Das Goswami in Puri.

One day Raghunath Das Goswami Prabhu said to him, “Dada! I am getting weaker day by day. I have to pass urine twenty-five times during day and night. The Ashramites are very much inconvenienced on account of me.”

Baba Mahashaya looked at him for sometime, then said, “Have you taken your bath?”

Prabhu: Not yet.

Babaji: Well, then let us go to the Ganges.

Both of them went to the Ganges. After making obeisance to the sacred river, they went down and stood in water, deep upto the waist. Baba Mahashaya suddenly turned grave and said to Goswami Prabhu, “Tell me where you stand at the moment.”

Prabhu: I stand in the Ganges in Navadwip.

Babaji: Promise that standing in the Ganges in Navadwip you will do as I say.

Prabhu: I promise standing in the Ganges in Navadwip that I shall do as you say.

Babaji: Now take Ganges water in your hand and repeat what I say.

Goswami Prabhu cupped his hands and filling them with Ganges water began to look at Baba Mahashaya, wondering what he would ask him to say.

Babaji: Say "Mother Ganga!"

Prabhu: "Mother Ganga!"

Babaji: "I offer to Radharamana Charan Das Baba all the diseases that plague my body. You stand witness."

Goswami Prabhu was aghast! His whole body trembled. But like one spell-bound he said with tears in his eyes, "I offer to Radharamana Charan Das Babaji all the diseases that plague my body. You stand witness." So saying he poured the water into the hands of Baba Mahashaya as he had requested. Baba Mahashaya sprinkled the water over his head and embraced Goswami Prabhu. As soon as he did this he began to look pale. He then asked Goswami Prabhu to dip thrice into the river. When Goswami Prabhu came out of the river after the third dip, his face looked radiant and the body healthy.

One day Baba Mahashaya went to see a garden in front of Srivas Angan with Sri Hari Majumdar, a resident of Navadwip. The garden had a number of fruit trees, flowers of different hues and a drawing room. Baba Mahashaya said to Hari Majumdar, "This is just the type of place where I want to sit.¹ I would like to purchase it. Will the owner sell?"

Majumdar: The owner of this garden is Mahitosh Babu and he has been anxious to sell it.

Babaji: Very good! Then settle everything with him today and now. I do not want to leave this place for a moment.

The garden was purchased. Labourers were engaged for repairing, remodelling and giving it a new shape.

¹ Baba Mahashaya implied that he wanted to sit there in *samadhi*.

THE ARRIVAL OF SRI SRI RADHAKANTA

But how could Baba Mahashaya live in the garden without Radha and Radhakanta (Krishna), the twin divinities of his heart, the life of his life and the soul of his soul? His heart began to pine for Them and Their *prema-seva* (loving service).

Any disturbance in the heart of the devotee invariably produces corresponding disturbance in the heart of Radha and Krishna. They also began to long eagerly for his *seva*. One night They appeared to Baba Mahashaya in a dream and said, "Look, we are in distress. You will have to rescue us."

Baba Mahashaya was overwhelmed. He said, "Prabhu! Where are You?"

Krishna: We are lying buried under the floor of the temple of Pranakrishna Mullick in Satgachiya.

Babaji: How will I know in which part of the temple You are lying buried?

Krishna: I am lying under the garbage in the North-eastern corner of the temple. Sri Radha and a Chaturbhuj-Narayana-murti¹ are lying behind two brass pots under the South-west corner.

Baba Mahashaya: If the owners of the temple do not let me enter the temple or do not allow me to bring You, what shall I do?

Krishna: Anyone can go and bring us. The owners will not object, because they are worldly-minded and are not at all interested in Us.

Baba Mahashaya was very much distressed to hear about the miserable condition of the deities. He began to weep and could not sleep anymore. Early next morning he sent a man to Satgachiya to call Kunja Das Goswami. When Kunja Das came

¹ A *murti* of Lord Narayana with four arms.

he explained everything to him and asked him to go and bring the deities. Kunja Das went with Vipina Bihari Goswami.

Baba Mahashaya began to wait impatiently for the arrival of the deities. He went again and again out of the Ashram to see if They were coming, but returned disappointed. Once, however, when he went out, he saw Kunja Das Goswami and Vipina Bihari Goswami coming. He ran towards them and embraced the Sri *vigrahas* of Sri Radha and Sri Radhakanta. He was enraptured. *Sattvika-bhavas* appeared all over his body. He went dancing to Sri Gurudeva. Gurudeva was happy to see the deities. He enjoined that They should be duly installed after *abhisheka*. On the auspicious day of the appearance of Nityananda Prabhu They were installed in the newly purchased garden, which was by now completely renovated and named 'Radharamana Bagh.' A sign-board was put outside the garden bearing the following inscription:

Sri Sri Vrindavan-Lila
Sri Radharamana Bagh, Anangananda
Sukhamaya Kunja
Seva by Ananga Manjari Devi
of Sri Lalita Sakhi's group.

Adequate arrangements were made for the *ashtakalina-seva* of Radha and Radhakanta.

On the second day of the month of *phalgun*, Shukla Paksa, Bangabda 1312 (1905 A.C.), Babaji Mahashaya joined the *nitya-lila* in his *manjari* form to serve Radha-Krishna in the Nitya Anangananda Sukhamaya Kunja, while in the form of Baba Mahashaya he sat in *samadhi* in Radharamana Bagh, where he sits still.¹

¹ His life-size statue of bronze in sitting posture is installed over the *samadhi*.

APPENDIX

REMINISCENCES

Some of the reminiscences of Barha Babaji Mahashaya written by his direct disciples and published in *Charita Sudha* (the original biography written in Bengali shortly after his departure), are here reproduced in an abridged form in their own language.

SRI APARA PRASADA PAUL

My name is Aparasada Paul. I passed B.A. in 1881 and began to study Law in Hugly College with a view to become a lawyer. But I was all the time anxious to find a guru. My father had told me that if I wanted to find a guru I should pray to Lord Shiva. So I began to fast on Shiva-ratri¹ and chant the name of Lord Shiva. After three or four days Lord Shiva was pleased to appear before me in a dream. He uttered a *mantra* in my ear and said, "Later on someone will give this *mantra* to you of his own. You accept him as your guru and do as he says. Give up the idea of becoming a lawyer. Become a teacher." I gave up the study of law and became a teacher.

I was working as a teacher in Hilat Chandra Institution in Calcutta, when I had the opportunity of listening to the

¹ Lord Shiva's appearance day.

heart-melting and soul-inspiring *kirtan* of Sri Rama Das Babaji at the house of a friend. I had never heard such *kirtan* before. I began to think if Rama Das Baba has such power to transport people into ecstasy, how much more powerful must be his guru. I began to wait eagerly for an opportunity to have the *darshan* of his guru. Soon I heard that he had come to Calcutta and was staying at the house of Sri Jogendranath Misra in Darjipara. I went to see him. I saw him sitting amidst a number of devotees like a moon surrounded by stars, shedding its light on them all and winning their hearts by his loving smile and ambrosial talks. There was something in his eyes that beggars all description. It seemed that a flood of light and love flowed from his eyes and made everyone feel that he was being carried away from the land of eternal want, hunger and strife to the land of eternal peace and happiness. For a moment he turned his eyes towards me and said, "You are a teacher and have heard the *patha* of *Chaitanya Charitamrita* from Pandit Rama Das. Isn't that so? How did you like the *patha*?" I was surprised how he knew that I was a teacher and I had heard the *patha* of Pandit Rama Das. I said, "Yes, I not only liked the path of Pandit Rama Das, I also liked very much the *kirtan* of your Baba Rama Das." He said, "You are fortunate," and renewed his conversation with the other people. I listened to the conversation till 10 p.m., when I was compelled to return home most unwillingly. On reaching home I realized that I had brought only my body with me and left my heart and soul with him.

The next day I went to him again as soon as the school was over. Immediately on seeing me he said, "Come master, come. I have been thinking of you. Master, tell me one thing. You sat here for five or six hours yesterday and have come again immediately after school-hours today. What has brought you here? The desire for *sadhu-darshan*?"

I said: I have not come to you because you are a *sadhu*.

Babaji: Then what is it that has attracted you?

I said: I had heard from my mother that my two elder brothers had left this world before I was born. After I saw you yesterday, I began to feel that you were one of them.

As soon as Baba Mahashaya heard this, he was overwhelmed. Tears of love streamed out of his eyes and the other *sattwika-bhavas* appeared on his body. He embraced me lovingly and uttered in my ear the same *mantra*, which Lord Shiva had given me in dream. Then he said in a voice choked with emotion, "Look, Shiva dropped the word '*bhagavate*' from the *mantra* as it is in its original form,¹ because He wanted you to be in more intimate loving relationship with Krishna. I shall tell you all about the path, which will enable you to achieve that end. It is true that you are my younger brother. Never forget that."

Baba Mahashaya's loving and soothing embrace brought about a sudden and complete change in me. There was horripilation in my body and I was drowned in the ocean of transcendental bliss, such as I had never experienced before. I was completely sold out to him. It became impossible for me to leave his sweet company or do any work except that, which he asked me to do.

One day Babaji Mahashaya had gone to the house of Hari Das Dada of Katal Bagh with his companions. I had also gone with him. *Kirtan* was going on there, when suddenly he asked me, "Master, will you wear *kanthi*?"

I said: What is the use of *kanthi*?

Babaji: The wearing of *kanthi* puts an end to all kinds of suffering.

¹ The original *mantra* is 'Om namo *bhagavate Vasudeva*.' The word '*bhagavate*' signifies *Aishvarya*. In *prema-bhakti* such as that of the *gopis* of Vraja, who stand in intimate loving relationship with Krishna, Krishna is not regarded as Bhagavan, but as a cowherd, Who is the son of Nanda and Yashoda.

I said: If that be so, you can put a thick rope of *kanthi* round my neck.

Then smiling like a child he took one *kanthi* from his own neck, one from the neck of Hari Das Dada and one from each of the three other Vaishnavas he chose and put them all round my neck. While doing so the manner in which he said again that the *kanthi* would put an end to all suffering convinced me that it would actually be so and no other *sadhana* or *bhajan* was necessary. Immediately after that he asked someone to mark *tilaka* on my forehead with *gopi-chandan* and gave Nitai-Gauranga *mantra* in my ear. There was no end to my joy.

Once I suffered from cholera. My condition became serious. The pulse stopped and I was about to die. At that time Gurudeva was in Vrindavan. But in my unconscious state I saw that he was sitting by my side, saying, "You will not die now. You have more work to do." From that moment my condition began to improve. After sometime Gurudeva came back to Calcutta. Pulin Dada brought him to me. I was still lying on bed. But I stood up and made obeisance to him. I said, "Baba, this time I would have died." He repeated with a smile, "You will not die now. You have more work to do." About a year after this, my son-in-law was afflicted with cholera. As soon as I came to know about that, I went before the picture of Gurudeva and expressed my anxiety. The picture seemed to laugh and say, "Shiva, Shiva!"¹ I understood that my son-in-law would not survive. He died the next day. After a few days Gurudeva wrote to me a letter, in which he said, "Shiva, Shiva!" you are always chanting 'Shiva, Shiva!' Regard this happening also as Shiva. There is no cause for anxiety. On receiving this letter come to Puri." I went to Puri.

¹ Shiva is the god of destruction. 'Shiva' also means goodness or happiness.

As soon as I had the *darshan* of Sri Gurudeva all my anxieties disappeared. I went there for fifteen days, but stayed on for eight months. All the time I felt as if I had just come.

One day I asked Gurudeva, "Is it not possible to realize *prema-bhakti* without taking *bhek*?"

Babaji: Why not? You begin to love others as you love your own children and gradually you will begin to realize *prema-bhakti*.

I said: Then I think I should pass B.L. (Bachelor of law) and become a lawyer. It is not yet too late for that.

Babaji: You have your own worldly anxiety. Why entertain the anxiety of others. You are a teacher, remain a teacher. Children are like *sadhus*. Entertain their company, not the company of worldly people.

One day Gurudeva gave me a hand-written copy of '*Bhakti-Ratnakara*' and said, "Master, read this. This is a precious book. But remember, after you have read it I shall examine you."

After I had read the book I said, "I have read. Now you can examine me."

He said, "Allright, tell me in short what is the essence of the book?"

I said, "The central point that I gathered from the book is that Mahaprabhu inaugurated the *yauthik* method of *bhajan* or group-*bhajan*. Mahaprabhu Himself, together with His followers preached the congregational chanting of *Harinama* and asked Nityananda Prabhu, Advaita Acharya and others to do the same. After them Srinivas Acharya, Narottama Das Thakura and Shyamananda preached the singing of *Harinama* in groups. Thereafter, for a long time *yauthik-bhajan* remained in abeyance and the *mahatmas* began to practise *bhajan* individually in isolation from others. Now by your grace the revival of *yauthik-bhajan* is again going on." As soon as

Gurudeva heard the name of Narottama Das Thakura tears began to flow from his eyes and the *sattvika-bhavas* adorned the whole of his body. I had hardly finished my answer, when he began to sing a song in praise of Narottama Das Thakura and said to me, "Master, you give me company on *mridanga*." I had never even touched a *mridanga*, but I was surprised that I played it and played so well that in future whenever Baba Mahashaya sang, he asked me to play on *mridanga*.

One day Gurudeva said, "Mahaprabhu is so merciful. By inaugurating the method of group *sadhana* in the shape of congregational chanting of *Harinama*, He has cleared the path of emancipation for the *jivas* of Kali."

I said, "That may be, but I have not been able to do any *sadhana* whatever. I do not know what my fate is going to be."

Gurudeva said, "Look master. Do not bother about your fate. Leave it upon someone else.¹ You will be blessed by Krishna-prema."

I said, "I do not know what Krishna-prema actually means. How to know it?"

Gurudeva: It is not possible to compare Krishna-prema with anything in the three worlds.² But if you begin to love someone selflessly, you can get an inkling of it. Do you know what my *bhajan* is? These boys that live with me—I do their *bhajan*.

I thought that in this way Sri Gurudeva wanted to emphasize the importance of group-*sadhana*. He meant that in this kind of *sadhana*, even if one was not able to do any *bhajan*, one's remembrance of his godbrothers, who did *bhajan*, was itself *bhajan*.

¹ By 'someone' he implied himself.

² Heaven, earth and the subterranean regions.

SRI PANCHANAN MUKHOPADHYAYA

My name is Panchanan Mukhopadhyaya. My maternal grandfather's name is Sri Prasanna Kumara Bandopadhyaya. He lives in village Satgachiya, situated between Ambika Kalana and Guptipara in Hugly District. I lived with him. My maternal grandmother's two brothers Sri Gaura Mohana Goswami and Sri Vipina Bihari Goswami also lived in Satgachiya. They were the *sevaits* of the famous Temple of Madana Gopal in Satgachiya. Vipina Bihari Goswami had a large number of disciples.¹ He passed most of his time in *sankirtan*. Once he had gone to the Ashram of Bhagavan Das Babaji Mahashaya in Kalna. There he met Barha Babaji Mahashaya and Jai Nitai (Sri Devendranath Chakravarti) for the first time. He brought them both to Satgachiya. Baba Mahashaya lost no time in winning the affection of each and every member of our family. He called my maternal grandmother "Masi" (maternal aunt), my maternal grandfather "Mausa," my mother "Didi" (sister) and Vipina Dada, the maternal uncle of my mother, "Mama" (maternal uncle). At that time Baba Mahashaya wore *dhori*, *kurta* and *chadar*. There was no sign of *vairagya* in him and he was called Rajendra Babu. But even then my grandfather and Vipina Dada did not fail to recognize the *mahapurusha* in him. He stayed with us for three or four days and left.

Next time he came with the great Navadwip Dada, who was like his second self. It was only through him that we could catch hold of him. Navadwip Dada was simple like a child and loving like an angel. His dance and *kirtan* could easily melt the hearts of the hardest of sinners.

This time Babaji Mahashaya lived in Satgachiya for about a month. Everyday he performed *kirtan* in the Temple of

¹ Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura also was his disciple.

Madana Gopal. Most of the people in the village were Shaktas (worshippers of goddess Durga). They had scant regard for the Vaishnavas. But the *kirtan* of Baba Mahashaya brought about a change of heart in them. They felt like being transported into a land of joy and peace, they had never experienced before.

Navadwip Dada frequently came to our newly built house, to which we had now shifted. Once my mother fell seriously ill. My grandfather and grandmother knew from her horoscope that she was not going to survive. Her condition worsened rapidly. She became senseless and began to breathe her last. At that time came Navadwip Dada dancing and singing *Harinama*. Everyone stood up and began to sing *Harinama* with him. *Kirtan* went on for sometime. The sound of *khol-karatal* made my mother open her eyes. She went to Navadwip Dada slowly rolling over the ground and caught hold of his feet with both of her hands.

After sometime Navadwip Dada went singing to Vipina Dada's house. He said to him that he had gone to see Suchita Didi, because she was destined to die that day. Shortly after Navadwip Dada had left our house my mother began to sweat profusely. She said, "It appears that the heat in my body is subsiding and I am feeling better." She sat up. The doctor attending upon her said that she was out of danger. The ladies who had come to see her from the neighbourhood began to say to each other, "Prasanna Kumara's daughter was almost dead, but a Babaji came from somewhere and saved her. He was no ordinary Babaji, but a *mahapurusha*." After ten months and ten days my mother gave birth to a daughter. She looked healthy and handsome. But when she grew it was discovered that she could neither stand nor move even an inch. She was like an inert object. She became a cause of great anxiety to my mother.

The third time, when Babaji Mahashaya, Jai Nitai and Navadwip Dada came to Satgachiya, they also came to our house. My mother said, "I am worried, because you have come and I do not find anything ready, which I can give you to eat."

Baba Mahashaya: Masi, you have soaked rice in water and ground it, and Hari has brought orange juice from Sylahat. Why not mix the two and make sugar-plums?"

Mother: Baba, how did you come to know about it all? Tell me who you are?

Babaji: I am your child Masi and none else.

Both my grandfather and grandmother now understood that Baba Mahashaya was not an ordinary person. My grandfather said, "Baba! Have mercy on us. We are great sinners."

Baba Mahashaya said, "Mausaji and Masiji! How can I be merciful to you? You are both like god and goddess. You should kindly bless me."

My grandfather and grandmother were Shaktas, but they had rosaries. Baba Mahashaya taught them how to do *japa* and *bhajan*. They began to practise *sadhana* on the lines indicated by him.

The day Baba Mahashaya came to our place, the dignitaries of the village like Sri Bhagavati Charan Mukhopadhyaya, Sri Sharda Charan Mukhopadhyaya and Sri Gauramohana Goswami came to him and said, "Rajendra Babu! You always eulogize Gaura-Nitai. We would like to see Them. Can you not make us see Them today?"

Baba Mahashaya said, "How can a poor creature like me make you see Them? But if They wish, They can certainly appear to you." As usual he started *kirtan*. The village-folks began to come. Even the women and the children felt attracted. They all came and joined the *kirtan*. An unprecedented current of devotion ensued. It appeared that the flood-gate of

prema-bhakti had opened and everyone was swept away in the current.

In the midst of *kirtan* Baba Mahashaya held Bhagavati Charan Mukhopadhyaya and Sharda Charan Mukhopadhyaya by the hand and began to dance. As soon as he held their hands they also began to dance, as if under a spell. Bhagavati Babu had a heavy body. He could not even walk freely. Everyone was surprised to see him dancing. After sometime Baba Mahashaya shouted "*Hare Krishna!*" and left them. But they continued to dance as long as the *kirtan* lasted. Slowly, the whole atmosphere was charged with a divine presence. Those who had desired to see Mahaprabhu, actually saw Him. In deep gratitude they began to weep and roll at the feet of Babaji Mahashaya. The brother-in-law of Kunjalal Goswami began to shout, "I am blest, I am blest! I had a glimpse of Vrindavan-lila!" Everyone else began to speak of the *darshan* of some kind of *lila*. Some were lying in ecstatic state and their teeth were clinched. Even women and children were lying in that state. My mother was sitting in a corner with my sister in her lap. Baba Mahashaya came dancing near her, shouted "*Hare Krishna!*" and jolted my sister with both of his hands. Then he held her by the hand and began to make her dance. She continued to dance for some time. Everyone was surprised to see a girl dancing, who could not even stand. Even today she can walk and dance as everyone can see. After that *mahasankirtan* many people were sold out to Babaji Mahashaya for ever. Vipina Bihari Dada and Madhu Dada renounced the world and began to live with him.

After a month Babaji Mahashaya went to Puri. Within a year after that my father, grandfather and grandmother died. There was no end to the anxiety of my mother. She did not know how to bring up her minor son and daughter.

As soon as Babaji Mahashaya got the news he sent Navadwip Dada to inquire about our welfare. After sometime

he came himself to Satgachiya to see us. Both, mother and I, burst into tears to see him. He took me in his lap. I began to weep more bitterly. He caressed me and said, "Nothing to fear my child. You are mine and I am yours." Then turning to my mother he said, "Why worry so long I am there. You need not be anxious about your minor children. I shall even beg for them, though you know Who supports whom. It is the Lord, Who supports everyone. Remember Him and depend on Him. The world is transitory. Here people come and go. No one lives eternally with anyone, except the Lord. The Lord is so sweet and loving. Human life is precious. It is meant for His *bhajan*. Do His *bhajan* and you will be at peace." We felt considerably relieved.

I was only a child when my father died. But Baba Mahashaya gave me so much affection that I never felt I was fatherless. He fulfilled all my needs. He tolerated my impertinence, my obduracy, my anger and all like a good father. He was for me my guardian, my guru, my God and everything. Even today I can say that I know of no god, except him.

After sometime I was laid down with malaria. It persisted for a year. At the end the doctor of the missionary hospital in Kalna lost all hope of my life and declared that I was completely in the hands of God. I became so weak that I could hardly sit. One day I felt that I was going to die. The same day Baba Mahashaya was to go to Navadwip from Calcutta by steamer. Raghunandana Goswami was also with him. Something happened to the steamer, which compelled them to get down at Guptipara, where by chance they met Kunja Mama and Vipina Dada. They brought him to Satgachiya. He stayed with Kunja Mama. While on the steamer he had asked Harijala "How is Panchu?" Harijala had replied, "He has been ill for a long time. God alone knows whether he will survive or not." Therefore, immediately after reaching Satgachiya he

sent for me and my mother. Kunja Mama's home was close to mine. My mother took me there in her lap. As soon as Baba Mahashaya saw me he took me in his lap and said, "How are you my child?"

I said: I have been suffering from malaria for a year. It appears that I will not survive.

Babaji: Do not fear. I will take you to Puri for change of climate and you will be alright.

I said: What made you come here unexpectedly at night?

Babaji: I heard about your illness. Therefore I came here, otherwise I would have reached Navadwip this morning.

Most merciful Babaji Mahashaya postponed his visit to Navadwip and got down at Satgachiya for the sake of this poor soul, who had neither *bhakti*, nor any other quality to attract his attention. This is a notable example of his causeless mercy, which rained uniformly upon all fallen souls like me.

Baba Mahashaya blessed me and left for Navadwip. I began to recover. But since he had desired that I should go to Puri, my mother took me there. We stayed there for two months. When I had fully recovered, I became impatient to go to Navadwip. We went there. Baba Mahashaya arranged for our stay in a room near his Gurudeva's Ashram in Baralghat, where he was staying.

On the anniversary of the appearance of Nityananda Prabhu he installed the Thakura brought from Satgachiya in the newly purchased Radharamana Bagh in Navadwip. The next day he shifted to Radharamana Bagh from the Ashram of Gurudeva. That day he sat there like a *kalpataru*, to give everyone what he wanted. He asked a man to blow the horn. Crowds of people began to come on hearing the horn. He gave each one of them what he wanted. He asked me to distribute cloth. I began to distribute cloth freely. I was surprised to see

that howsoever much I distributed the stock of cloth remained undiminished. I asked Baba Mahashaya how that happened. He replied, "It is Nitai's *bhandar* (godown). Howsoever much you distribute it would never be empty. You go on distributing freely."

One day I was applying oil on the head of Babaji Mahashaya, when a Goswami came from Srikhanda for his *darshan*. He said, "Where did you get this boy from?" Baba Mahashaya replied, "He is my own. I want to marry him." I said with a start, "I will not marry." He said, "Why? Is it not possible to do *bhajan* in household? A man who is really inclined towards *bhajan* can always do it. whether he is a householder or not. One who is not so inclined cannot do it in any circumstance. But as far as you are concerned, is *bhajan* necessary?" Obviously he implied that since I belonged to him, my material and spiritual responsibility was his. Then, turning to Goswamiji he said, "He comes of a highly respected Brahmin family. I desire that you marry him and build a house for him in Navadwip. I want that he should live near me, because I love him."

His desire could not remain unfulfilled. Today I am married and I live in Navadwip. My living in Navadwip Dham would not have been possible, if he were not so mercifully disposed towards me.

That year, cholera epidemic broke out in Navadwip. Baba Mahashaya asked my mother to go home and leave me with him in Radharamana Bagh. My mother said, "I came here thirty months ago with Panchu. What will people say if I go alone? He is my only son. I will take him with me. He will return soon."

Baba Mahashaya did not want that I should go. He said angrily, "He is your son, not mine. Alright, take him."

At the time of my departure when I went to take leave of him, he embraced me and said with tears, "You are going away.

Go, we shall not meet again." I did not know that what he said would actually come true. When I returned I did not find him, but his *samadhi*. I fell senseless on the ground. The shock was too much for me.

GLOSSARY

Abhisheka: Bath ceremony.

Acharya: Spiritual preceptor.

Adharamrita: Remains of food eaten by a Vaishnava.

Adhivas-kirtan: Ceremonious *kirtan* prior to *ashtaprahar-kirtan*.

Aishvarya: Lordliness and grandeur.

Aparadha: An offense committed against the Lord, His Names, or the Vaishnavas.

Arati: Ceremony for worshipping the Lord.

Antashchintit siddha-deha: Mental reflection of the transcendental body.

Asana: 1) Prescribed posture for sitting still at ease for a long time. 2) A carpet or mat to sit on.

Ashraya: The person in whom love originated.

Ashtaprahara-kirtan: Non-stop *kirtan* for twenty-four hours.

Atma: Soul.

Babaji: A term used to denote a Vaishnava, who has forsaken the world for the sake of God, and as such who stands in the position of a spiritual father to the erring son of men.

Bhagavan: God.

Bhagavat-saptah: Reading of *Srimad Bhagavatam* for seven days.

Bahirvasa: An outer cloth reaching down to the knees.

Bhajan: Religious practice for the attainment of a religious end.

Bhajan-kuti: Place for performing *bhajan*.

Bhava: Religious emotion.

Bhek: Vaishnava Sannyasa.

Bhiksha: Alms collected by begging.

Bhoga: Food offered to the deity.

Chadar: A sheet of cloth worn over the upper portion of the body.

Chandan: Sandalwood powder or paste.

Chandi: It is one of the scriptures containing a vivid account of the *lila* of the Divine Mother.

Charanamrita: The water in which the feet of the deity or the guru is washed.

Dakshina: Gift due to the guru for *siksha* given by him or to the priest of a religious performance.

Dana: Toll or tax.

Dandavat: Prostrated obeisance.

Datun: Twig used for cleansing teeth.

Darshan: Seeing, specially used in the sense of seeing the deity or a *sadhu* or *mahatma*.

Dasya-rasa: Relish of a relationship cultivated under the sentiment of being a servant of the Lord.

Dham: Divine abode.

Dharma: Religiousness.

Dhoti: A sheet of cloth worn over the lower portion of the body.

Dhup: Term for the *bhoga* service of the Lord.

Diksha: Giving or receiving *mantra*.

Gauda: Another name for Bengal.

Ghat: A landing place in a river or in a pond.

Ghee: Clarified butter.

Grihastha: Householder.

Gopi: A love-intoxicated damsel of Vrindavan.

Harisabha: Place for religious gatherings.

Homa: Fire sacrifice.

Ishta: The God one worships.

Japa: Mantra-meditation while counting on beads.

Jiva: Living entity.

Jnana: Knowledge.

Kachori: A sort of bread made from flour and filled with pulses and fried in *ghee*.

Kamandalu: An earthen or wooden water-pot used by ascetics.

Kantha: The word literally means 'rags,' with which *sannyasis* are to cover their bodies.

Kanthi: A necklace of *tulasi* beads worn by Vaishnavas.

Karma-kanda: Ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites prescribed by the *shastras* for the achievement of certain ends.

Katha: Spiritual discourse, talks.

Kaupin: A cord or 'dor' to wear around the waist and a piece of cloth, both used as underwear.

Kaviraja: The physician trained in the *Ayurveda*—the Vedic Science and art of medicine.

Khir: A dish made of rice, milk and sugar.

Kirtan: Chanting the Names of the Lord.

Kirtaniya: One who is proficient in performing *kirtan*.

Kunda: Pond or small lake.

Kunthi: Staff with a brass plate bearing some holy symbols attached to it at the top.

Kuti: Place to perform *bhajan*.

Lila: Pastime (specially used for the transcendental pastimes of the Lord).

Lila-smarana: A form of *sadhana* in which the *sadhaka* devotes himself exclusively to meditation on the divine *lila* of Radha-

Krishna as performed during the 24 hours every day.

Lota: Small metallic container.

Madhukari: A form of begging specially prevalent in Vraja. The saint begs for pieces of bread from several houses like the bee that collects nectar from several flowers. He refuses to accept the whole meal from a particular house.

Madhura: Sweet.

Madhurya-rasa: Relish of a relationship cultivated under the sentiment of being a woman very intimately close to Krishna.

Mahabhagavata: A *siddha* saint.

Mahabhava: The highest state of *Madhurya-bhakti*, characterizing the maids of Vraja. The highest state of *mahabhava*, which is called 'madanakhiya,' characterizes only Sri Radha.

Mahanta: Head of an Ashram.

Mahatma: A saint.

Manjari: Gopi, who is exclusively devoted to Radha and who loves Krishna only because Radha is devoted to Him.

Mantra: Potent utterances. They are inseparably associated with God. Properly taken, they bring us face to face with God.

Math: A kind of monastery.

Maya: The external illusory energy of the Lord.

Mridanga: An oval shaped drum generally used in *sankirtan*.

Mukti: Deliverance from the bondage of *Maya*.

Murti: The image of the Lord.

Nagar: A young man to whom women are attracted.

Nagara-sankirtan: The performance of *sankirtana* through the village.

Nagari: A young woman to whom men are attracted.

Nikunja-mandira: The place of meeting of Radha and Krishna in the forest; a retreat for lovers.

Nupura: A tinkling ornament worn by the ladies around their

ankles.

Nava-grahas: The main nine stars.

Ojha: The quack credited with the knowledge of incantations and efficacious herbs which are sometimes found useful in curing diseases and other affections.

Parampara: Disciplic succession.

Parikrama: Circumambulation of a holy place or temple.

Parshadas: The eternal companions of the Lord.

Pattal: Plantain leaves or any other leaves joined together to serve as plates.

Patha: Discourses on the philosophy and *lila* of the Lord.

Prasada: Food, which becomes sanctified after being offered to the deity.

Prema: Love for God.

Pujari: Priest.

Purascharan: This is a religious practice calculated to push us forward in the onward march of our spiritual life. It is generally held during an eclipse, and consists of *Japa*, *Homa*, *Tarpana*, *Abhisheka* and *Brahmanabhojan*.

Puri: A sort of bread fried in ghee.

Raganuga-bhakti: *Raganuga* is spontaneous as against *vaidhi* or ritualistic worship, which is mechanical. The former flows from *raga* or continuous attachment to the Lord, the latter is controlled by the rules and regulations laid down in the scriptures.

Ragatmika-bhakti: The *bhakti* of the eternal divine associates of Krishna in Vraja. It is not possible for an ordinary person in physical body to attain the *ragatmika-bhakti* of the *parikaras* of Bhagavan, whose bodies are made of divine bliss.

Rasa: Transcendental relish due to loving relationship with the Lord.

Rasagulla: A juicy sweet prepared from milk.

Rasa-lila: Circular dance of the gopis with Krishna.

Ratna vedi: The elevated seat of gems.

Rishis: Men of God-realization, who lead godly life, think holy thoughts, speak of God and God alone and act up to the biddings and willings of the Lord.

Roti: Flour cake baked at home.

Sadhaka: One practising religious discipline for the realization of the Lord.

Sadhana: Practice of religious discipline for the realization of the Lord.

Sadhu: Saint.

Sakhi: Girl-friend.

Sakhya-rasa: Relish of a relationship cultivated under the sentiment of being a friend or companion of Krishna.

Samadhi: 1) State of deep meditation without any outer consciousness. 2) The tomb of a saint.

Sattvika-bhavas: External signs of internal emotion attendant upon Krishna-prema. They are *stambha* (stupor), *sveda* (perspiration), *romanca* (thrilling of the body), *svara-bhanga* (break of the voice), *vepatha* (trembling), *vaivarnya* (change of color), *ashru* (tears), and *pralaya* (loss of consciousness). Sri Jiva Goswami says that *pralaya* causes cessation of outward action, but not of inward feeling for Krishna (*Priti-sandarbha*).

Sampradaya: School or devotional line identified by a disciplic succession.

Samskara: Effect of actions in the present or previous life on the mind.

Sankirtan: Congregational chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord.

Sarovara: Pond.

Satsanga: Association of holy persons.

Seva: Transcendental loving devotional service.

Sharbat: A cool drink.

Shastras: Scriptures.

Shal-patra: Leaf of a timber-plant.

Shanta-rasa: Relish of the sentiment of being faithful towards one's God.

Shikha: Tuft of hair overgrown on the crown of the head.

Shital-bhog: Refreshment that has a cooling effect in summer.

Siddha-deha: Transcendental body.

Siddha-mahapurusha: One accomplished in *bhajan*.

Siksha-guru: Guru who teaches, but does not give *mantra*.

Sinhasana: Throne or altar.

Sloka: Sanskrit verse.

Snana: Bath.

Snana-vedi: Is the spacious seat on the high floor overlooking the royal road, where the Lord was seated to take His bath during the Snana-Yatra festival.

Sringari Panda: Is the chief of the worshippers entrusted with the daily service of the Lord.

Stotra: A hymn of praise.

Sutra: Sacred thread.

Svabhava: Mature *bhava*.

Tantrik: A follower of *tantras* or sacred books prescribing a code of religious ceremonies particularly for the worship of Shiva and Durga.

Tattva: Metaphysical principle or reality as it is.

Thakura: The Lord.

Thal: A metallic flat dish.

Tilaka: Consists in the bearing of marks, of sandal paste or of *gopi-chandan* (the holy earth of Sri Vrindavan), on the different limbs, the paste being hallowed by the utterance of the holy names of the Lord in the course of the smearing process.

Trisandhya-kirtan: Kirtan performed three times during the day.

Tulasi: Sacred basil.

Tulasi-mancha: It is the custom to raise a mound of earth and plant the *tulasi* thereon, for it is a sacred plant, which is to be worshipped daily with holy water, and as such it is to be kept out of the way of all defiling and desecrating influences.

Upasana: Mode of worship.

Upasaka: One doing *upasana*.

Utsava: Celebration.

Vaishnava: The word literally means 'worshippers of Vishnu.' Vishnu is the Eternal Principle that pervades the worlds. It is the principle that furnishes the common background of all the religions.

Vairagi: One who has renounced the world.

Vatsalya-rasa: Relish of a relationship cultivated under the sentiment of being the father or mother of Krishna.

Vigraha: The form of the Deity.

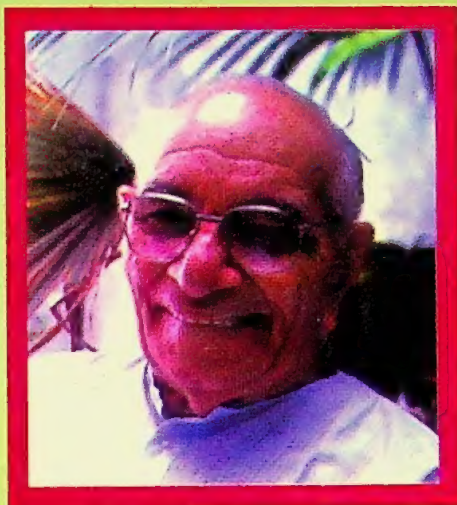
Vishaya: The person to whom love is directed.

Vrajavasi: A person born in Vraja, or the resident of Vraja.

Yagna: A fire oblation or religious offering.

Yugas: Cycles of creation—viz., the Satya, the Treta, the Dvapara and the Kali.

Born in 1909, Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor took his M.A. Degree in Philosophy from the University of Allahabad in 1931 and the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the same university in 1938. He worked as Research Fellow,



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